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TRAGEDY OF SUCCESS.

Still hold them in thy tender fostering while
The cool air of a wider world they brave,
These household growths that rose beneath thy smile
To be the earliest offering at thy grave.

Nor fail me where, upon the steepening slope,
Viewing my future lonely road I stand,
With earnest purpose, though with humble hope:
Be my strength still, true heart and faithful hand!

TRAGEDY OF SUCCESS.

By Mary Lowell Putnam

"Aux plus déshérités le plus d'amour."

BOSTON:
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.
1862.

PS2669
.P6T7

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TICKNOR AND FIELDS,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the District of Massachusetts.

RIVERSIDE, CAMBRIDGE:
STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY H. O. HOUGHTON.

TRAGEDY OF SUCCESS.

SENTENCE.

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

HERBERT.
EMMA.
AGATHA, *formerly called* PERDITA.
ALICE.
HERMANN.
LESLIE.
WOODFORD.

SLAVES.

HELEN.
HECATE.
DORCAS. *also known as* PAMÉLA.
THERESA.
EZEKIEL.
MELAS.
FLORA.
BOAZ.
CHLOE.
MILO.
ROXANA.
PYRRHUS.
DAFFY.

TRAGEDY OF SUCCESS.

SENTENCE.

SCENE I.

Belrespiro. — Lawn behind the house. Groups of slaves conversing with earnest face and gesture. In the foreground are MELAS, FLORA, BOAZ, ROXANA, PYRRHUS, DAFFY, *and others.*

MILO *enters.*

He 's come! he 's come! and how the gravel flew!

BOAZ.

Of course he 's come. We knew it before you.

PYRRHUS.

And I the first! 'T was I that brought you word.
Well, tell on, Milo, let 's know what you 've heard.

MILO.

Not if you all break in upon me so.

PYRRHUS.

Tell away! Where did Mr. Herbert go?

MILO.

Straight to the dining-room.

BOAZ.

And Chloe there!

PYRRHUS.

Well, what it must have been to hear him swear!

MILO.

No, still and stern.

BOAZ.

He only thought the more.
But what did Chloe?

MILO.

Slipped behind the door, —
And whisked off spryly when he turned away.

BOAZ, *aside.*

Why could n't she have had the wit to stay?
[*To Milo.*
And you saw ——

MILO.

Nothing.

BOAZ.

Nothing heard?

MILO.

As well.

BOAZ.

And nothing 's all you are come here to tell?

MILO.

Well, it is something what he did *not* do.
And what he did not find is something, too.
When I took Folly's rein, he had n't thought
To say we never groomed her as we ought;
Nor ever bade us, with his natural frown,
Cover her well, and walk her up and down. —
There stands the creature, dripping, quivering, heaving!
Pyrrhus, it is a sight beyond believing! —
He entered, calling upon no one's name;
No one ran down to meet him, when he came.

PYRRHUS.

Where is Miss Helen all the time?

ROXANA.

Alone
In the oak room.

BOAZ.

So her fine friend is flown!

PYRRHUS.

Friend? has she one?

FLORA.

A hundred at her call!

MILO.

Friends of her like and ours! — no friends at all!

FLORA.

That 's to be proved.

BOAZ.

I think it is!

FLORA.

We 'll see!

MILO, *looking about him.*

But what I ask is, whose will all this be?

ROXANA.

Of course Miss Emma's.

BOAZ.

May be, — may be not.

PYRRHUS.

Some say that all is going to Miss —— *what?*

ROXANA.

Miss Agatha.

PYRRHUS.

Well, there 's a name!

ROXANA.

And, oh,

How strangely, Boaz, Boaz, things do go!

That Perdita! who ever thought that she
Could come to be as much made of as we?
And now just look at her! How fast and far
She 's mounted up above where we all are!

MILO, *mimicking Dorcas.*

Perdy! Perdy! I hear old Dorcas call!

ROXANA.

And how she used to shake her, too, and all!

MILO.

It won't do now for us to say the rest.

BOAZ.

No, — rule the unruly evil.

CHLOE, *entering.*

That is best.

BOAZ.

I saw she had a something ——

ROXANA.

So did I.

PYRRHUS.

I thought she rather carried her head high.

BOAZ.

Why, not exactly. But she had a way ——
Chloe 'll remember that she heard me say ——

CHLOE.

Well, now I think, I seem to recollect ——

BOAZ.

I told you once the skilful could detect
Signs of distinction even in the low.

CHLOE.

And you meant Perdita? Yes, that was so.

BOAZ.

It is a comfort, friends, to call to mind
That, even among the greatest of mankind,
The world has seen such instances before:
My namesake Boaz lay on a barn-floor;
Moses was put in bulrushes to sleep;
The royal David once looked after sheep;
One Scripture king was brought to such a pass
That seven years long he had to live on grass!

ROXANA.

Miss Agatha was never in that case!

PYRRHUS.

Nor no one else upon our master's place!

ROXANA.

It often chanced me speak her a kind word, —
If only she remember it.

MILO.

I 've heard
That memory 's sharper set on bane than boon.

BOAZ.

The slap you hit her that hot afternoon,
Coming from meeting ——

MILO.

Somewhat out of tune.
Yes, that she won't forget so very soon!

ROXANA, *to Boaz.*

You need n't cast it up to me! What one
Has ever snubbed that girl as you have done?

BOAZ.

I have admonished only.

MILO.

Let that run!
You can't unslap her nor unsnub her now:
All you can do is curtsy down and bow.

[*Curtsying and bowing, as he speaks, in mimicry of Roxana and Boaz.*

MELAS.

There 's one was never bad to her: Flora, you.

FLORA.

I never did much for her.

ROXANA.

That is true!
You can't make claim!

FLORA.

I 've enough else to do.

CHLOE.

You don't expect, then, that you 'll keep your place?

ROXANA, *laughing.*

Do only look at her astonished face!

FLORA.

Not keep it!

ROXANA.

Well, I 'm glad you 've found your voice.
Would n't one think she had it in her choice?
The place, we mean, of our young lady's maid,—
Miss Agatha's, in fact. I am afraid,
My pretty little Flora, you will find
[*Nodding at Chloe.*
The mistress has another in her mind.

BOAZ.

If you want favor, Flora, and not blame,
Don't be too much with folks that I could name.

DAFFY.

You mean Miss Helen!

BOAZ.

Silence, boy! You dare
Give my words meaning that they will not bear?

PYRRHUS, *glancing at the upper windows of the house, and nodding towards it.*

Why, what do you suppose, now, will be done
With——

BOAZ.

That unhappy lady and her son?

[*Pyrrhus nods.*

Least said is soonest mended. And the less
You say of her, the less to mend, I guess!

DAFFY.

What! do you think they 'll punish her so bad?

BOAZ.

A question not for you to ask, my lad!

ROXANA.

You don't think, surely, that they 'll let her stay?

BOAZ.

Whatever I may think, I cannot say.

PYRRHUS.

You don't suppose that she 'll be sent away?

BOAZ.

I don't suppose. But what you 'll see, you 'll see.
And when you see it — you may think of me.

PYRRHUS.

And now the boy? Where do you think he 'll go?
They 'll send him straight off, won't they?

BOAZ.

Pyrrhus, no!
He 'll stay about here for a season yet;
Then pass from hand to hand in their own set,
Till he gets far enough to be forgot
And take his portion with the common lot.

PYRRHUS.

That 's the way, is it?

MILO.

Boaz knows mankind.

BOAZ.

You may say that! He 's neither deaf nor blind.

MILO.

Where is that Hecate? No one seems to ask.

BOAZ.

She hides her face since she has dropped her mask.

ROXANA.

So great a person once, and now forgot!

BOAZ.

But as brush crackling underneath a pot
Is the short pleasure of the wicked's day!
Waste no more thought on Hecate! Let her stay
Where she has hid herself.

MILO.

Yet I must say
The thought of her amuses me. Such art!
Let none of you rest boast yourselves! How smart
That creature was whom we all called moonstruck!
And then to think upon her daughter's luck!
To take and hold for twenty years the seat
Of the young mistress! Oh, it was complete!
Then *Mr. Herbert senior!* to cheat him!
Carry his son off! Oh, that was n't slim!
Believe, I 'm not the only one will laugh
To hear that old bird has been caught with chaff!

ROXANA.

Oh, if the mistress heard!

MILO.

You won't repeat!
You know, if you began that game, you 'd meet
Your more than master at it! Be discreet!

BOAZ.

Roxy is right. What! young man, do you jest,
When your own mistress is so sore distressed?
Think of her daughter! think how she was dressed!
Sackcloth and ashes we might call her best,
Compared with what that angel should have worn!
You must remember her all soiled and torn?
And then the buffetings that she has borne!
You can laugh, Milo, at what makes us mourn?

[*Clasping his hands.*

And when we think how that sweet saint was barred
From her own mother's love! Oh, that was hard!
Shut out, too, twenty years from all she had!
Nothing was ever heard of half so bad!

FLORA.

Worse might have been.

CHLOE.

Worse?

ROXANA.

What worse, pray?

FLORA.

Why, think if it had been the other way, —
If Perdy 'd been the wrong one set up there,
And poor Miss Helen cheated of her share.

PYRRHUS.

Well, to be sure!

ROXANA, *indignantly.*

What!

MELAS, *aside to Flora.*

Flora, do take care!

CHLOE.

They say you wait upon Miss Helen still.

FLORA.

Whom should I wait on?

CHLOE.

Well, don't take it ill.
I did n't blame you for 't, I only said.

ROXANA.

And some think she might do without a maid.

FLORA.

If you 're of them, don't think your thoughts to me!
She has a maid while I live.

BOAZ.

Thought is free.

CHLOE.

So it is, Boaz. We can't hold our own,
And might as well let other folks' alone.

FLORA.

If you could see her! Though your hearts were stone,

They 'd soften into human flesh again,
Brought into presence with that silent pain!

BOAZ.

We did n't mean to call up all this stir. —
You 're out, no doubt, upon some job for her?

ROXANA.

She sends on errands, then? Keeps up her state?

BOAZ.

The force of habit, Roxy.

CHLOE.

Yes, that 's great.

BOAZ, *to Flora.*

You 're a good girl. If I could save you now
Some steps or trouble! Do but tell me how!

FLORA.

I came out only just to take the air.
But if you really should have time to spare,
And would do something for me ——

MELAS.

Here am I!

FLORA.

I see you, Melas. Your turn by-and-by.
Boaz was first to offer.

MELAS, *to himself.*

That 's the way!
Just what my heart is full of others say!

FLORA, *to Boaz.*

Oh, Boaz, how considerate you are!
You 'll have to go you don't know yet how far.
But you will tell me, if I ask too much.
I like a candid man.

BOAZ.

I 'm known as such.
How can I help her?

FLORA.

Her? Oh, now I see
It is a *her* you want to help, not me!

BOAZ.

'T is for yourself? Oh, test my zeal and try!
For others I could walk, — for you I fly!

MELAS, *aside.*

How wrong in Flora, when she knows so well! —
Poor Chloe's face! I noticed how it fell! —
Oh, women, women! What! and Flora, too,
Is pleased with flattery, no matter who
May bring it to her! takes it as her due! —
I could forgive her for not liking me;
But put before me such a one as he!

[*Boaz, while talking with Flora, gradually withdraws from the group, Flora following, until they stand quite apart from the rest. Chloe watches them anxiously; Melas looks another way.*

BOAZ.

Don't hesitate to speak it, Flora.

FLORA.

Well,
I really am almost ashamed to tell.
To such a man as you a thing so small
Might seem to be beneath him.

BOAZ.

Not at all.
The day of small things must not be despised.
Let my humility be exercised!

FLORA.

Oh, then, if you get something by it too ——
You know Ezekiel?

BOAZ.

I suppose I do.
Most people know him.

[*Aside.*

Has he humbugged you?

[*Aloud.*

If I don't see him as the many see ——

FLORA.

It 's not Ezekiel that I want, — not he!

But in his garden, Boaz, oh, there grow
Such strawberries! If you would like to go ——

BOAZ.

Berries! how would you have me bring them back?
I misbecome a basket or a pack.

FLORA.

Don't bring them back at all. You 'll only say
"*The season 's forward*," and then come away.

BOAZ.

What good will that do?

FLORA.

Why, he promised me
That I should have those strawberries.

BOAZ.

Promised! *He!*

FLORA.

And he 's quick-witted; there 's no need to dint
Things into *his* brain: he can take a hint.

BOAZ.

But creature comforts are not in his line.

FLORA.

No, not in his, but very much in mine.
And what are strawberries raised for? Can you tell?

BOAZ.

What are they raised for? Why, they 're raised to sell.
And, to be just to him, I never knew
Him sending gifts to such young things as you.

FLORA.

Well, Boaz, now I 'll tell you the true truth.
That poor old Hitabel! without a tooth,
And flat in bed besides! Do only think!
For three long years mainly to live on drink!
You may imagine how some tender food,
To mump away upon, must do her good!
The berries were to be for her, poor thing!
He would n't do a favor to a king,
But to a poor old woman ——

BOAZ, *with candor.*

Well, he might.

FLORA.

I should n't want to ask for them outright, —
'T would not be delicate, — but you might glance
Upon the strawberry-patch, as if by chance,
And, falling into an admiring gaze, —
"*These must be those I have heard Flora praise.*"
You are so natural! You can turn it so!

BOAZ.

Jael herself could not have said you no!
Yes, I, if any, am the one to go.
You know, perhaps, it is not every face
Finds welcome upon Colonel Winter's place?

FLORA.

Oh, yes, indeed! I know the Colonel wrote
To our good master gone a saucy note,
Saying our folks had too much leave to roam,
And begging him to make them stay at home.
Our master flamed up, it was good to see! —
Oh, where to find another such as he! —
But, Boaz, it was just because you 're known
For a judicious man, that you alone
I chose to ask to go. Why, no one dreads
Your putting uppish thoughts in people's heads.

BOAZ.

It tickles me now that the Colonel should
Keep that Ezekiel there, from whom no good
Is to be looked for, mark me, yet should fear
The harmless simpletons that go from here!

FLORA.

Ah, but we 're apt to boast our feed and fare:
So different from what they get down there!

BOAZ.

What then? They could n't get it, if they tried.
He has his will. What does he want beside?

FLORA.

'T is pleasanter to have folks satisfied.

BOAZ.

His never would be, Flora! I declare,

That, if his place were hanging in the air,
And not a neighbor soul to visit there,
And prick fault-finding into them, yet they
Would break out with it in the natural way!

FLORA.

Ezekiel never grumbles.

BOAZ.

He 's too deep:
A hypocrite that works while others sleep!
That fellow is a great deal more than sly:
He 's one that looks his master in the eye!
And yet the Colonel, a hard man to please,
And one not fond of leaving folks their ease,
Gives that Ezekiel his will and way,
Letting him go and come by night or day!

FLORA.

He trusts Ezekiel, and they say he must,
Because he has no other he can trust.

BOAZ.

Well, what old Peter said once is too just!

FLORA.

What was it, Boaz?

BOAZ.

Why, the old man said,
In his experience, people are afraid

Of what won't hurt 'em, and hold out their arms
To give an open welcome to their harms.
My mind deceives me, if Ezekiel 's not
Making his heart like to an oven hot.
What if the Colonel, caught some morning, learned
That he, like Ephraim, was a cake not turned?

FLORA.

You 'll never make me think Ezekiel 's bad.
You 'll not tell him you think so?

BOAZ.

Am I mad?
I 'll flatter up his berries.

FLORA.

I 'm so glad!
"*The season 's forward*" 's all you need to add;
And we shall have the best that can be had.

BOAZ.

You 'll get them how?

FLORA.

He 'll come himself, be sure.
Ezekiel is no sayer, but a doer.

BOAZ, *aside.*

Is that a hit?

[*Aloud.*

I hope I am the same.

FLORA.

I hope so, too.

CHLOE, *coming up.*

With all you have that name.

MELAS, *seeing Chloe join them, comes up too.*

What! are you going, Flora? Have you found ——

FLORA.

Nothing for you quite yet. But — you be round!

[*Flora goes. Melas returns to the other group, and begins talking to Pyrrhus. Milo, Roxana, and Daffy soon after go out.*

BOAZ, *turning to Chloe with benignity, but a little embarrassed.*

Ah, Chloe!

CHLOE, *taking up the corner of her apron.*

Boaz!

BOAZ.

Well, what is it, dear?
Why, bless my soul! — it can't be! — what! a tear?

CHLOE, *sobbing.*

I did n't mean to interrupt — disturb ——

BOAZ.

You came in good time, my dear child, to curb
That poor girl's — madness, I might almost say.

CHLOE, *sobbing.*

But Flora — looks — so well — for her — to-day!

BOAZ.

Sosoish! I was thinking all the while,
Dear Chloe, she could never have your smile.

CHLOE, *smiling.*

Boaz, oh, if I only could believe ——

BOAZ.

What motive, Chloe, have I to deceive?
Assuredly, you must have marked how she
Insisted on a private talk with me?

CHLOE.

You cannot wonder that I take it ill
You bear her sauciness and do her will?

BOAZ.

And think you that it is for her, my girl,
I do her nonsense errand to that churl?

CHLOE.

What for, then?

BOAZ.

Chloe, let not woman pry
Into man's matters. They are quite too high
For your discernment. And you ought to know
From Scripture history what that comes to.

In curiosity was always woe.
From Eve to Matty Meddlesome 't was so.
Women get scalded fingers, when they try
To have one of them in man's apple-pie.

CHLOE.

And Flora? Has n't she put one in yours?

BOAZ.

Well, Flora has no secret that insures
Her from the common lot. There is no charm
That can keep female impudence from harm.

CHLOE.

You let her into your high matters, though?

BOAZ, *aside.*

It 's cruel in me to distress her so.
[*Aloud.*
No, my poor foolish little Chloe, no!
She knows no more than you what I design.
Doing her errands, I am following mine.
To men who plan great things is often sent,
To help themselves with, some mean instrument.
Flora, perhaps, may furnish me some aid, —
But not so much as you, my pretty maid!
I know who 's kind and diligent and true:
The one who has my confidence is — you!

CHLOE.

You really mean it?

BOAZ.

Well, are you content?

CHLOE.

I have your confidence?

BOAZ.

To some extent.
I could not promise, and you would not ask
That I should set before myself the task
Of teaching you the workings of my mind.
Such studies are not fit for womankind.
Knowledge of what we want, not what we do,
Nor what we think of, is the thing for you.
"*What can we do to help?*" helps meet inquire,
And, having done it, silently retire.
"*What can I do to help?*" my girl would say.
Ask me, then, Chloe, and I 'll point the way.

CHLOE.

What can I do to help?

BOAZ.

That 's sweetly said.
Much, very much. — Flora 's Miss Helen's maid?

CHLOE.

She calls herself so, and she has the face
To say she always means to keep her place.

BOAZ.

And she may make her word good yet.

CHLOE.

Oh, how?

BOAZ.

It does n't look so, certainly, just now.
But listen, Chloe. Know it has been found,
By the old fathers, that the world goes round.
What 's down to-day may be upside next turn.
We must be careful, therefore, what we spurn.
Wait till you 're sure which way the wind will set,
And don't be holding your head *too* high yet.

CHLOE.

You are a perfect Christian! To the weak
And fallen you can be so kind and meek!

BOAZ.

As preacher 't is my duty, and as man.

CHLOE.

Now tell me mine. I 'll do what woman can.

BOAZ.

And this she can: can lend her pretty ear
To gather up what Boaz wants to hear.
This can she: she can let her pretty eyes
Wander for Boaz, be his little spies.
Chloe, I 'll trust you farther than I meant.
Things in this household give me discontent.
Wherever I may look, I plainly trace
A certain something upon every face.

CHLOE.

Boaz! you don't! what can that something be?

BOAZ.

Enough 't is something that is kept from me.
Chloe, my Chloe, we must find it out.
A most uncomfortable thing is doubt!

CHLOE.

Oh, Boaz, nobody could mean you ill!
Or is it me, you think?

BOAZ.

Poor child, be still!
None mean you evil. Humbleness protects,
And I am one whom no ill-will affects.
It is not that; but duty and desire,
Both working in me, prick me to inquire.
I am not watchful for my good alone,
But make the mistress' interests my own;
So, seeing certain signs of secrecy,
My cogitations much have troubled me;
For it has been a maxim with me long,
That, where there 's mystery, there 's always wrong.
Now, Chloe, do not miss the smallest thing:
A nod, a hem, a beck, a whispering, —
All may have meaning that you cannot see:
Treasure all up and bring them safe to me.
Keep a sharp eye on Flora: she 's the heart
Of every mischief; but we 'll balk her art!

Especially if she put on an air,
In doing things, as if she did n't care
Who saw or heard, oh, Chloe, then beware!
For that 's the semblance that the wicked bear.
If you should come within Miss Helen's door,
You must be spry and watchful all the more.
On that impostor my suspicions fall:
I have an inkling she 's the root of all.
Be careful that you don't offend her, though:
That 's my first word and last: we never know
What may be going to happen here below.
Set all in memory down as in a book;
And keep your honest simpleness of look.
Oh, Chloe, in this world so false and base,
How precious to me is that artless face!
What so distrustful Thomas could descry
A double meaning in that single eye?
If you could still seem shallow, yet be deep, —
Still prattle idly, yet my counsel keep, —
Still wear your own do-nothing sort of way,
Yet have your senses all the time in play, —
Be humble still, yet, when I bid you, bold, —
Oh, Chloe, you would be a mine of gold!
And now, when I come home, what shall I bring
Back to my little charmer? what good thing?

CHLOE.

Only yourself!

BOAZ.

An answer kind and just.

Myself I 'll bring you, full of love and trust.
Your generous little heart I will not grieve.
I know to give is better than receive.
To tend and serve is woman's richest treat.

[*Tenderly.*

And *could* you manage something nice to eat?
There 's little chance of getting dinner there:
Ezekiel's provender is rather spare.

[*Chloe nods joyfully and goes.*

BOAZ, *turning to go, sees Melas, whom Pyrrhus has just left.*

Ah, Melas, my good boy, you 're still on hand!
If you should have a moment at command,
And meet that little Flora, would you say
That she shall see me with the close of day?

MELAS *looks fiercely after Boaz — who goes away slowly — and then falls into a dejected attitude. Flora enters and passes near him. He does not lift his eyes, nor appear to notice her, but, after she has gone out, gazes earnestly in the direction where she disappeared. After remaining a few moments absorbed, he sings.*

They tell us Truth is dearer
  Than Fancy, and more fair;
But now I 've seen her nearer,
  I know her harsh and bare.

Far lovelier is seeming!
  How mournfully gave way
My happy moonlit dreaming
  To this forsaken day!

Love stood, all gay and shining,
And held forth, full of glee,
Sweet wreaths that he was twining:
I thought they were for me!

Love! mock not my believing!
It was not worth thy art
To compass the deceiving
Of such a simple heart!

FLORA *enters, passes Melas again, hesitates a moment, and then returns.*

You can sing, Melas!

MELAS.

I have that left yet.

FLORA.

Oh, Melas, with your heart, you can forget!

MELAS, *as if going.*

He who 's forgotten, Flora, surely may.

FLORA.

Forgotten? You? O foolish Melas, stay!
We must not quarrel till a happier day.
I want to answer back: you know I 'm not
A tardy payer in that kind of scot.
You know I 've spirit, and you know I 've pride,
And what a tongue — when I 've the heart — to chide.
Now think that I have cried all, and all said,

And that your doubts of me are fully paid.
We can so easily put off our cares!
Oh, Melas, there are those that *must* keep theirs!

MELAS.

You know me, Flora: you know if I could ——

FLORA.

Yes, indeed, Melas, I was sure you would!
It was n't *I* that had a doubt of *you.*

MELAS.

I thought that we were not to quarrel.

FLORA.

True!

MELAS, *laughing.*

First take the beam out, as the Scripture saith.

FLORA.

But I have got to draw upon your faith.
It is because of that I called to mind
Your little failing, not to be unkind.

MELAS.

So be it, Flora! only set my task!

FLORA.

You must do blindly everything I ask;
Must come and go, as I say *go* and *come;*

Speak when I bid you, when I bid be dumb;
You must not even look curious at me, nor
A single once must say to me, "*What for?*"

MELAS.

Hard, — little Flora! but, if it must be,
I could for you ——

FLORA.

No, Melas, not for me;
But for Christ's sake, and for dear charity.
Not on my own part could I thus entreat;
Not for my own good could I use deceit,
Nor try you, open-hearted boy, to win
To artifice that almost seems a sin!
More distant griefs are knocking at your heart;
Dangers we need not share in claim our art.
My bosom aches beneath another's cares;
My temples bleed with thorns that are not theirs.
But could you see the head bent humbly down
That owns the pressure of the torture crown!

MELAS.

Her sorrows pierce me by your look and word;
I hear her voice in yours; my heart is stirred
To its last corner. Flora, could you think,
That, if her service called me, I should shrink
From danger or from labor? Tell me all!

FLORA.

All that I can I 've told.

MELAS.

But you let fall
Something of danger.

FLORA.

Certainly. What then?

MELAS.

Only this: danger is the part of men.

FLORA.

Of women, when they 're called to it.

MELAS.

Not when
A man is by who has the right and will
To stand between the tender one and ill.
Speak, then! What is the purpose, and the plan?
I can do more to aid than Flora can.

FLORA.

I know not yet what the design may be;
Nor do I know what part is set for me.
I 've done my little duty for to-day,
Plotting those wide ears and quick eyes away,
And, through an unsuspected messenger,
Sending a hint that is to profit *her*.
But I give blind obedience, as you must.

MELAS.

Flora, you know in whom you put your trust?

FLORA.

Yes, in a better head, a stronger heart
Than all of us have, and a deeper art.
Projects that head grows have a steadfast root;
Plans that heart fosters cannot fail of fruit.

MELAS.

Fruit? — bitter fruit it may be, to our taste!
Do not rush, Flora, with too generous haste
Upon your own undoing. You may waste
Yourself upon a useless work. I can
Even risk this chance, because I am a man.
I, at your bidding, or at hers, would face
Not deadly danger only, but disgrace.
But how can woman venture far, when blame
Brings her not only misery, but shame?

FLORA.

Melas, we shall succeed! we shall succeed!

MELAS.

It may be: still our humble hearts may bleed,
While higher ones with satisfaction beat
At the well-working of their clever feat.
I know not all, and yet I can divine
What the end is, and who the plans combine.
If all go right, perhaps they 'll show some sense
Of our deserts. Perhaps they will go hence,
Contented with the issue of the deed,
But thoughtless of protection or of meed

For those who wrought it. This, if we succeed, —
If we succeed! But, Flora, if we fail!
What would that bring us to? To *stripes*, to *jail!*
And beyond these, to endless banishment!
No loving word will follow where we 're sent.
In vain we turn the eager ear! in vain
The thirsting sight to its last limit strain!
No breath from home, no presence! The hard earth
Reproves the exile with his distant birth;
The very lights of heaven overhead
Reluctant rays upon his pathway shed;
The palest spectres of joys perished fill
The loneliness in which he walks, until
The weary-hearted turns his sickening eyes
To death and darkness from the foreign skies.
A man might brace himself to meet this fate;
But woman doomed to die so desolate!
What man that was a man could calmly view
Such bitter destiny marked out for you?

FLORA.

Not death and darkness, but new birth and light!
Have we not learned that on the heavenly height,
Which lies beyond this valley deep and dim,
We find the life that we have lost for Him?
Better on earth to droop and die alone
Than be of those whom Jesus will disown!
They only truly count among the dead,
Who, in His own, Him have not comforted. —
Melas, it would not be like *you* to try

To have a better place in heaven than I!
In heaven? perhaps they would not let me there;
But send me down to Satan and despair!
Could you be happy, in your robes of light,
While I was shivering with pain and fright?
They perish who have ignorantly erred;
How, then, with me, who 've threat and promise heard?
"*Sick and in prison*," was the Saviour's word:
Sick and in prison is Miss Helen's lot;
And who is kin to Christ, if she is not?
And then that darling! who could ever be
A little one of Jesus, if not he?
A wonder, Melas! What if, when we die,
And stand up there together, you and I,
Waiting upon Messiah's last decrees,
We hear, — "*Ye did it unto one of these!*"

[*She gives her hand to Melas.*

And if not? — Let us work for Jesus' love,
Although they take no note of it above.
We will not lend the Lord, but freely give;
And, as His will is, let us die or live!

MELAS, *pressing her hand to his heart.*

It is agreed, then! We will all things share:
Let Melas suffer everything you bear,
And, where he ventures, you have leave to dare.
Lead the way, Flora! Tell me what to do!
I hear the Master speak to me through you!

[*They go out.*

SENTENCE.

SCENE II.

A room in the house at Belrespiro. The furniture is simple, but of graceful design. On a table in the middle of the room are books, a work-basket, a child's little velvet cap, and a letter.

HERBERT, *enters abruptly.*

Not here! Some moments yet for thought! — Oh, Helen,
Is my heart freer that I do not find you, —
You, who could lighten once the heaviest hour?

[*He walks hurriedly up and down the room, then stops near the table.*

She does not seek me. Is it pride or fear? —

[*Sees the letter and takes it up.*

For me! My father's hand!

[*Throws it down.*

I will not read it!
I know it all as well as if I did:
Full to the brim with pious consolation!
As if I were not crazed and desperate
Enough already, on the top of all
I must be dinned with piety and wisdom! —
And yet he has — I must allow it — insight
Into this world's affairs. And I 'm bewildered;
I have no settled judgment of my own;
I cannot look before me or behind:
The world seems shattering into wreck about me.
Let me know where I stand and what I am! —

[*Seizes the letter and tears it open; reads.*

"My son, the tidings of your great misfortune
Have filled your mother and myself with grief.
I write to you at once, that such support
As a fond father's counsels, sympathy,
Can give a child, you may receive from me. —
And first, my son, forget not in your sorrow
By whom this blow is struck. Bow reverently
Before that Higher Will which prostrates ours.
Oh, who shall say, my son, that this reverse
Has fallen upon us wholly undeserved?
Our pride in our great wealth, our ancient name,
Was it unmarked of Heaven? Oh, my Herbert,
A haughty spirit goes before a fall!
We should have thought of this. But, since we have not,
What now remains is to conform ourselves
To the decrees of Heaven, — so to act
As not to merit further chastisement. —
And first, we must consider what to do
With this poor child whom we supposed our own.
It is not to be thought of that a child
Who has your features and has borne your name
Should take his place among the other servants." —

[*Herbert, interrupting himself.*

The other servants! God! the other servants!
Oh, Hecate! Hellcat! were you but my slave! —

[*Reads.*

"Still less could he continue in your house,
Being what he is, as your acknowledged child.
What I have thought of is: Your mother's sister

Married — it was a sorrow at the time —
A Northern man of no account. She died.
But she left children. They 're not too well off.
The second son — now, it appears, a poet —
Was tutor once to Richard Stanley's son." —

As if I did not know it! What of him? —

"It was before you were engaged to Helen.
You may not recollect him. Good young man.
Another brother is a clergyman.
One of them would perhaps receive the child,
And, for a moderate remuneration,
Superintend his bringing up. — Of course
The boy is not to know his history." —

[*Breaking off.*

I am not prone to hate, — but if there lives
A man whom I could hate, 't is this James Leslie.
Did he not dare to raise his eyes to Helen?
I saw it well, though Helen did not see it, —
I think she did not, — but my eyes were sharpened
By love and — no, not jealousy; poor devil,
He was not worth it. But his mad presumption
Awoke contemptuous anger, as it should.
I read him through: this man who taught for money
Not only dared admire my future bride,
But even to think I was not worthy of her.
His grave politeness did not take me in.
I felt his thoughts. Of late I 've often seen
His trumpery books lying on Helen's table.

That crazy hag read them aloud to her. —
Was ever man so tortured and perplexed? —

[*Reads.*

"It will be safe to trust him to the Leslies,
Paying each year a regular allowance
For his support, and leaving to themselves
The choice of trade, or business, or profession
That he shall be brought up to. They 're good people.
Something Quixotic in them, — like their mother:
But that 's the reason that I think of them
For this commission. They 'll do better by him
Than if he were the heir of name and wealth." —

Do better by him! Yes, I well believe it! —
Of name and wealth indeed! He 's Helen's child! —
A compensation? They will not receive it,
And I 'm to be beholden for a favor! —
James Leslie guardian to my Helen's child!
What do I say? father to Helen's child!
The child is not to know his birth; this Leslie
Will take the place, if not the name of father;
Perhaps even that! How keep from Helen the knowledge
Of her child's fate? Even if I concealed it,
Some one would tell her. These things will leak out.
Too many confidants in all these matters.
Leslie himself would leave no stone unturned
To bring it to her knowledge. 'T were as well
At once to let her know as try to hide it.
And then — then there would be a tie between them!
None binds her now to me — except her love:

I think she loves me. Yes, her sweet submission
To all my whims, her anxious care to please me,
Her gentle patience, — these are evidence
She loves me. Yes, I can be sure of that.
She loves me now; I have this hold upon her.
But if she make demands upon my love
More than I ought to grant? — I half foresee
She may expect what is impossible: —
Will not her love then cool? No duty binds her.
She is no more my wife; not yet — my slave.
This must be seen to ere another day.
No one as yet has called my right in question,
'T is true; — but then if she herself should do it?
Hecate was made free by her master's will,
And Perdita, — the daughter now and heiress.
But Helen — what is she — and whose? — My father
Regards me still as master of her fate.
And so I am, of course, in any case.
Who would dispute my claim? Absurd! absurd! —
This will be soon arranged. — Well, what 's the rest?
I left off here. Yes. —

[*Reads.*

"They 'll do better by him
Than if he were the heir of name and wealth.
So put your mind at ease. I 'll write to-day
And have the matter settled. Then dismiss it
Forever from your thoughts.

"Beside the child,
There is the wretched mother to be thought of.
We must not, even in this first bitter moment,

Commit injustice; we must not forget
That she herself is guiltless of this crime
Which has involved our families in gloom;
Nor that she sought, by frank and full confession,
To make atonement for the long imposture.
These things considered, let us do by her
As justice, prudence, Christian charity
Require of us. I am convinced, my son,
You will not for a single moment think
Of keeping this unhappy woman near you." —

Not think of it? I think of nothing else! —

"Though, in some points of view, the case might seem
To call for more excuse than do the most
Of these unhallowed unions, yet in others
It would be still more reprehensible.
The facts have been so public, she herself
Is so well known, has held such a position,
'T would make much talk. All circumstances tend
To give the matter notoriety." —

Well, that 's true, too. I must think out some plan. —

"I will not dwell on this. You are the last
To offer such a scandal to the world." —

Yes, to be sure, — it is not very pleasant
To be the fable of society. —

[*Reads.*

"I 've thought of several plans myself. One is,
To let her, too, be taken to the North." —

Never! — whatever else I do, that never! —

"With her accomplishments, she could perhaps
Maintain herself with very little aid.
But to this plan there are some grave objections." —

I should have found them out, if you had not. —

"First, she would not be parted from her child.
He would then know his history, and later
This might give rise to inconveniences.
Then her appearance and her manners and all
Would mark her out: she could not live obscurely.
The story would be bruited everywhere;
'T would have no chance to die away; and thus
This frightful scandal would invest our name,
Wherever it was heard. Still other reasons
Suggest themselves to me, — but these the chief.
In fact, it is a great deal harder question,
How to dispose of her, than of the child.
The plan I 've thought of for the present moment
Is, to convey her quietly at once
To the plantation of your Aunt Elise.
On this retired estate she will be safe
From prying eyes, malicious observations,
From all the miseries she must undergo,

If she continued in the neighborhood
Of what she once considered as her home.
There in retirement she can school herself
To bear this blow, and, in your good aunt's charge,
Will by degrees become habituated
To a new mode of life. We can decide
Hereafter on some permanent arrangement." —

What does he think of me? Have I no heart?
No natural feeling? Shall I send this woman,
This lovely, gentle, tender, feeling woman,
A woman who has been two years my wife,
Shall I, then, send her to wear out her days
In worse than solitude, — in base dependence
On that close-handed, psalm-singing old maid?
No, — if I did not love her, she should have
A better lot than that; but, as it is,
I cannot lose her, cannot part from her
Even for a time. Now first I know how strong,
How deep my love for her. Now first I learn
How priceless in herself this lovely creature.
The wealth and rank that seemed a part of her
Are stripped away, but she has nothing lost.
They took from her more lustre than they lent.
No, — come what will, I do not give her up.
Thus far I will respect my father's wishes:
I will not be the cause of open scandal;
I will find out some way to reconcile
My love with what I owe my reputation. —

[*Reads.*

"Trust all to me. I will consult and act.
Fear nothing. I shall soon work out some plan
Which will secure her comfort and your peace." —

I will provide for both. Trust all to me
Rather, my father. Trust, and ask no questions. —

"Things must be so arranged that she will never
Be seen or heard of in our world again.
For you, my son, I know this separation
Will be one trial more. Let sense of duty,
Let manly honor, strengthen you to bear it.
Remember what you owe yourself, your name;
Nor let a weak affection make you falter.
As soon as you are calm enough to hear me,
I wish to have a serious talk with you.
The surest way to throw the matter off
And bring the whole thing to oblivion
Will be, when all this has been duly settled,
To form a new connection. With your fortune,
With your advantages of every sort,
You can command as excellent a match
As we thought this was at the time you made it.
Your mother has already in her eye ——
But this is premature." —

Indeed, I think so!
Another marriage? — now? — oh, monstrous thought!
Yet 't is my father's own. —

"We soon shall meet;
Till then, my son, God have you in His keeping!
That He may give you strength to bear this blow,
And to act under it as virtue bids,
Is the devout petition of
Your father." —

[*Herbert stands musing with the letter in his hand, then:*

Who can it be, though, that my mother thought of?
Perhaps —— No, hardly probable; she is not
Quite rich enough to satisfy my mother.
Or —— No, they know I would not think of her.
Then —— Ah, I have it! now I know their choice!
Yes, she was but a child when I was married;
But now sixteen, a beauty and an heiress,
And our near neighbor: yes, I see it all.
They might as well have told me. Yes, I see.
If I were free, it would not be so bad! —
Am I not free? — Good God! where go my thoughts?
Could Helen see them! But she cannot see them.
In act I will not wound her; no, I *will* not! —
Yet if, hereafter, many years hereafter,
When all that now is new and terrible
Has taken its place among the things that are,
When equally our sorrow and our love
Have learned to hold themselves within the channel
Of every-day emotions, — what if then
I should fulfil my duty to my parents
And to society, and ——

[*Checking himself abruptly.*

Wait till then!

Down, down, intrusive thoughts! You make me feel —
Me, who am known the soul of truth and honor —
As if my bosom harbored hidden treasons. —
Treason to whom? To one who at this moment
Plots, perhaps, how she may resist my claims!
If so, if she have cherished even a doubt
Whether she still be solely, wholly mine,
Then was her heart the first to be unfaithful,
Then she herself has broken the spirit-bond
Which only holds her now. — Whence this distrust?
Have I not always known her fond, devoted?
In that soft heart can pride do more than love?
Could she who was so gentle, so compliant,
In her bright days, grow hard and positive
Now in her poverty and helplessness?
Impossible! And yet some inward instinct
Refutes my reasons and suggests a doubt. —
I cannot live thus. This unsettled state
Is worse to bear than any certainty.
This interview, so dreaded, so decisive, —
It must take place; already, this delay,
What thoughts may it have waked in Helen's mind! —
Am I prepared? Do I myself yet know
What I can promise, what I must refuse?
My mind is still in chaos. In her presence
What hope to find the calmness that now fails me?
Let me at least be clear in my own thoughts. —

Is it of thee I speak, my own sweet Helen?

Is it thy gentle presence that I fear?
To answer thee I would prepare myself?
I am prepared for all, except to lose thee!

[*Goes out hastily.*

SENTENCE.

SCENE III.

The large, low room in which Helen and Alice sat together in the Second Act of the Tragedy of Errors. The flowers are still where Alice placed them, but neglected and withered. HELEN *seated on a low chair, near a large sofa, on which lies a sleeping child; she looks towards the door, as if listening for some one's approach.*

HELEN.

An hour ago I heard his horse's feet.
He does not come. What feeling keeps him from me? —
A letter from his father waited for him.
He stays to read. Would he have stayed to read it
A week ago? — Perhaps the load of anguish
He 's borne about with him for three long days
Has weighed him down at length. His last strength fails!
Perhaps he lies, while I conjecture here,
Helpless in fever! Oh, he calls my name!

[*She starts up.*

And I stay here? I hesitate to seek him? —

[*She sinks down again.*

Ah, even in the forming of these fears
My heart refutes them! No, he calls me not!
But, sunk in reverie, listless and dejected,
He broods upon the sorrows I have caused him.
He has not strength to come and face my anguish;
He has not strength to look upon our boy.

His ruined life he sees spread out before him, —
The past a mockery, the future blank;
Hope, memory, henceforth alike forbidden! —
[*Rising.*
He suffers, and I live and am not there! —
[*Moves forward, but checks herself again.*
Unbidden? —
'T is my grief he fears to meet.
When he shall see me strong and calm and patient,
Ready to bear whatever must be borne,
He will be strong. We will consult together
How this misfortune may be best supported,
How its effects made lighter to our child. —
And yet I go not! What spell holds me here?
Oh, what new feebleness is this? My mind
Has lost its equipoise. I know no longer
How to distinguish my own selfish wishes
Or pride's suggestions from the voice of conscience.
Where lies the right? — Seek strength and light in prayer! —

Oh, in this ruin is my faith, too, shipwrecked?
No, no! my faith in God is firm! — In man? ——
[*She covers her eyes with her hand for a moment, then:*
My soul, oh, own not even to thyself
What fearful doubt stands between thee and him!
Let me save these, at least, — my love, my trust!
Oh, I will rescue them by force of prayer! —
And yet, when He, the Great, the Holy One,
In that dread night whose morrow was to find Him

Alone on earth, instinct with earth's affections, —
His life divided from the common life,
His human heart from human sympathies, —
When even He, turning for help to Heaven,
Prayed that the cup might pass from Him, it passed not.

O God, the strength that we may ask of Thee
Is strength to bear, and not to overcome!
Forgive my failing heart its fears, its faintness,
Father and God! Behold thy child, thy servant!
Aid me to say, to feel, Thy will be done!

[*Fervently.*

Thy will be done!

[*A door is heard to close violently. A few moments after, footsteps are heard approaching along the corridor.*

And yet — yet if it *might* be,
Oh, let the cup yet pass from me, my Father!

[HERBERT *enters hastily; stops a moment near the door. Helen rises as he enters, advances a few steps, and then remains standing. Herbert comes suddenly forward and clasps her in his arms.*

HERBERT, *holding her from him, and gazing at her with tenderness and admiration.*

My Helen! —

[*Aside.*

And I thought of parting from her! —

[*Aloud.*

You do not speak! You have no welcome for me?
No smile? Has one week made a change like this?

HELEN.

A week has made great changes.

HERBERT.

And in you?
Are you not still my love, my pride, my Helen?

HELEN, *aside.*

Oh, noble heart! Did I —— I could not doubt him!

HERBERT.

I see that sweet smile dawning. My own treasure,
You could not for an instant doubt my love?

HELEN, *aside.*

What shame is mine, that I could dare to doubt!
Oh, would I could forget that moment's treason! —
[*Aloud.*
Oh, Herbert, tell me that your love is left me!
With that, and with my child, I have lost nothing. —
Yet, if — dear Herbert, if —— But it is not so!
Yet, if it had been, — if you had been changed,
I should not still have had the right to blame you.
Great is my gratitude to you and Heaven
That this last trial was not laid on me! —
[*After a pause, in a low, tremulous voice.*
But, if the blight that rests upon my name,
Invading all, had even touched thy love,
Not even by a look had I reproached thee.
Silent or blessing thee, I would have passed

Forth from my Eden, from my golden time,
To the cold rigors of the iron world.
Too well I know the costly sacrifice
Fidelity to me must ask of thee! —
Oh, Herbert, and thy love has strength for all?

HERBERT.

My love? Oh, were I but secure of thine!

HELEN, *looking at him anxiously.*

Herbert, consider well. It is not question
Of courage to resolve a generous deed,
But of that patient strength which day by day
Supports the oppressive burden. Hast thou this?
Where'er we go, our story goes with us. —
I have thought over all. — Canst thou support
The averted look, the smile, the curious glance?
Canst thou look forward to the lifelong exile
That must divide thee from thy friends, thy parents?
The sojourn in another, ruder clime,
Amid new scenes and uncongenial manners?
All this must be resolved upon and borne,
If thou wouldst keep thy faith to me unbroken.
In every other land I am thy wife, —
Only not here. Hast thou considered this?
Hast thou bethought thee that thy childhood's home,
That home so loved, the birthplace of thy fathers,
Must pass to foreign hands when thou art gone?
Thou hast a son, but hast henceforth no heir.

[*Herbert turns away his eyes.*

Hast thou —— No, thou hast not considered this.
Thou didst but feel that all was light to love.
I bless thee for thy generous thoughtlessness.
Thou hast been true; thou hast been self-forgetting.
My trust in thee is safe. All other loss
I can encounter with courageous heart.

[*Herbert is about to interrupt her. She stops him by a gesture, and goes on in a low, but firm voice.*

Hear me, my Herbert! Other is my duty
Than thine: not to forget, but to remember,
Belongs to me. Thou hast fulfilled thy part;
I will not fail in mine. I must defend thee
From thy own heart, — must guard thy happiness,
Thy parents' peace, from thy rash self-devotion.
Before thou cam'st, I was prepared for this;
I had considered, had decided all.
But when I knew thee near me, my heart faltered.
When I beheld thee, when I heard thy voice,
A momentary dream involved my soul, —
A dream sweet, deadly, like betraying visions
That court the wayfarer on Alpine heights
From the steep path, to fatal, soft repose.
Thy truth, thy courage, give me back my own.
Herbert, we part! for this life's term we part! —
Hear me with calm! — Not ours the bitter parting
Of souls disjoined, — the parting without hope;
But, loving and respecting each the other,
We take our separate paths to one same goal,
The home of consolation and reunion.

HERBERT.

Part? — and in this cold tone to talk of parting?

HELEN.

Not cold, but firm. My duty calls me on:
I have no choice but to arise and follow.
Lighter to me the pain of the decision
Than to thee, Herbert. I must be the exile;
I must go forth orphaned of home and kindred.
Hardly couldst thou have passed on me this sentence;
And yet it must be passed. I call it on me,
Nor wait the second thought of thy cool judgment.

HERBERT.

I pass on thee the doom of separation
That thy lips coldly thus pronounce on me?
Little thou know'st my heart!
My own sweet Helen!
Thou hast no common courage, and for thee
I could brave much, — brave all: my friends' displeasure,
The world's reproach, — I can submit to these,
Let me but keep thee; and I know thy love,
Though calm and gentle, is profound and strong.
Thou couldst bear much for me, and thy clear mind
Looks down on vulgar prejudice. A name
Is not a spell for thee, my noble Helen!

HELEN, *aside.*

Oh, whither this? — What dark foreshadow shrouds me?

[*To Herbert, controlling her emotion with difficulty.*

Two paths lie open to us. A far land
Might offer us the home our own denies;
But this demands a sacrifice too great
For thee to give, too great for me to ask:
We have considered, have rejected this.
The other course remains: I with our child
Will seek the foreign home. I have no fear
But God will give me aid to guide him up
To be a noble man. This for my life
Is work enough, is happiness enough.

HERBERT.

For thine? And what for mine? Does no third course
Offer, that reconciles my happiness
With thine and his? Canst thou not trust my love
To make thy home secure and blest even here?

HELEN.

Herbert, be just! Unwilling have I wronged thee.
Common our grief, in common let us bear.
Thou wouldst not leave me all? No, thou wilt take
Thy part. Forego my company on earth:
Where'er I go, I will be true to thee,
Hallowed to thee throughout eternity, —
To thee and to our child. No human love
Other than these shall share my heart with God.

HERBERT.

Yes, Helen, thou art still in heart my wife.

Why shouldst thou leave me? Only human law
Denies a name that before God is thine.
Thou wilt be still my own? Helen!

HELEN.

Thy own,
Though seas and worlds divided, though the grave!
Only not thine, if thou thyself divorce.
Our souls unsundered, vain are space and time
To part us; but these severed ——

[*With a sudden burst of entreaty.*

Oh, set not
A passless gulf between thy soul and mine! —

[*Herbert averts his eyes. Helen observes his countenance and turns away despondingly. Aside.*

Oh, weakness harder to be met than force!
He has not strength! Did I not know it? Shall I
Demand of him what Nature has denied?
He has fine gifts, only not strength, not courage.
And has he not been wronged? Does he not suffer?
I will forgive. I will forgive and sue.

HERBERT, *seeing her softened expression.*

You are relenting to me?

HELEN.

Hear me, Herbert!
I have been called your wife, have borne the name

Of mother to the child you thought your heir.
Oh, by those ties that no deceit of mine
Has bound you in, I pray you hear me now!
Give me my freedom! give my child his freedom!

HERBERT.

Freedom? what freedom do you ask, my Helen?
Freedom to leave me? freedom to take from me
All that I have in life? Oh, think of me!
Think what I suffer! Think what I have lost
In losing thee! How have I gazed on thee,
Seeing thee do the honors of my house
With such a majesty and winning grace
Might suit an empress: pride and graciousness
In thy high bearing so exactly mingled
That all must love, yet with such reverent love
As a saint wins, — must fear, yet with such fear
As the pure look of a benignant angel
Might wake in hearts that felt themselves less pure!
How did I glory in the look of homage
That Herbert's wife won both from fop and sage!
How did I smile to see the ill-cloaked envy
With which men wished me joy of my good-fortune!
"So beautiful! so gifted! such an heiress!"
Thus ran the word. And now to find myself ——

HELEN, *aside.*

O God! O God! upon what treacherous sands
Has my hope built!

HERBERT, *seeing her look of anguish.*

Oh, but forgive me, Helen!
I meant thee no unkindness. Thou art dearer,
Far dearer now, in thy humility,
Thy touching sadness, and thy downbent brow,
Than in thy former majesty of mien.
Then, when I looked upon thy noble beauty,
Even I, thy husband, felt a secret awe
That damped my love, that my man's pride resented.
Thy altered state hath equalled thee with me.
I can now love thee truly as my own, —
Not as the wife whose proud alliance brought me,
Beside herself, an ample dower of lands:
It shall be mine to lavish gifts on thee.
Oh, Helen, thus to own thee, thus to love thee,
Thus claim thy love, this is the only thought
That holds me from despair! Oh, turn not from me!
Look not so pale, so stony! Cruel Helen!
Is not thy Herbert's anguish more than thine?
Thou art still rich in all that Nature made thee;
He poor indeed, if wholly robbed of thee! —

[*Pause.*

No answer yet? Still the same icy paleness!
What shall I say to move thee?

HELEN.

Say no more, —
Lest I go forth too desolate!

HERBERT.

Go forth?
This thy last word? — Such is the love of woman!
My happiness, my love, are nothing to her!
Her pride is all!

HELEN.

Had God demanded of me
A life of servitude, of rugged toil, —
Had He appointed me to expiate
The wrong done to the ruined Agatha
By lifelong service, I had rendered her
A sister's tenderness, a servant's duty,
Nor felt myself degraded. But to thee
I cannot be a slave. Thou, my child's father,
Must be what thou hast been to me, or nothing.

HERBERT, *aside.*

What a stern look! She never spoke to me
In this high way. Instead of being humbler,
From gentle and modest she is growing haughty.
She lays me down the law as if ——

HELEN, *gravely.*

Events
Have traced my course for me, nor left me choice.
The highest duty God has laid on mortals
Is that of parent.

[*Her voice fails. Softly and imploringly.*

Thou hast shared with me
Till now this office. We have watched together,

Rejoiced together, trembled, hoped together :
Dost thou renounce the sacred partnership ?

[*She approaches the couch on which the child lies.*

Oh, canst thou give to shame this cherished head ?
To shame, to misery, perhaps to guilt ?
Not the rude storm that swept our home and scattered
Our earthly vows has left him fatherless,
If thou rend not the spiritual bonds.

HERBERT.

Thou fearest for the child ? He shall not suffer.
He will not be a slave. At seven years old,
Or sooner still, he shall be sent elsewhere,
And brought up as thyself shalt indicate.
And other children, if there should be more,
Shall in like manner be provided for
As shall befit thy merits and my love,
Not their supposed condition. Lay aside
These idle fears ! Let no false sense of duty
Divide thee from thy home and from my love,
Which shall but be more tender, more ——

[*He approaches her tenderly.*

HELEN.

Desist
To urge a plea that is already judged.

[*She takes up the sleeping child and folds him in her arms.*

Henceforth I am the guardian of this orphan,
And know no other tie !

[*She goes towards the door.*

HERBERT.

Do you defy me?

HELEN.

Defy not God! With Him I leave my cause.

[*Goes.*

TRAGEDY OF SUCCESS.

APPEAL.

TRAGEDY OF SUCCESS.

APPEAL.

SCENE I.

In front of the house at Belrespiro. HERMANN *enters. Just before reaching the steps, he stops.*

HERMANN.

Ah, I 'm quite out of breath! I 've come too fast! —
I wonder no one thought of me before.
I, her old tutor, I, her second father,
What man so fit as I to be her guardian?
And 't will be hard, if, in this growing country,
Where every man wants more or less instruction,
What I 've to offer does not find a market. —
And I shall have a family to work for!
A daughter and a grandchild of my own!
How the thought thrills my heart! My own! my own! —

[*He goes on; when he reaches the steps, he pauses again.*

So here I am! Now comes the fit of chill! —
Herbert, — I never liked him, — how approach him? —
Will he accept, will he disdain my offer? —
Ah, cowardice has always been your bane!

You have good thoughts, but want the resolution
To carry out. Come on, then, Hermann! Courage!
Leave yourself no retreat! Once entered there,
You 've passed the Rubicon, and all must dare!

[*Goes hastily up the steps and enters the house.*

APPEAL.

SCENE II.

A room in the house at Belrespiro. HERBERT *alone.*

HERBERT.

What can he want, this tiresome German pedant?
I will be bound he comes to speak of Helen!
He has no tact, the boor, no delicacy!
How dare he interlope in my affairs?
Why do I see him? My absurd good-nature!
I might have sent him word —— But here he is! —

[*Enter* HERMANN.

Good morning, Sir. I hear you 've business with me.
Forgive me, if I ask you to be brief.
You must have heard that family events ——

HERMANN.

You know what place I held, Sir, in this house.

HERBERT.

Undoubtedly.

HERMANN.

You cannot, then, suppose
That these events concern me not.

HERBERT.

I thank you,

Good Doctor, for your well-intentioned visit.
I know that you, with all our other friends,
Feel for us in these family afflictions.
But I am sure you will not be surprised
That I prefer to bear my part of them
In solitude and silence. Therefore, Doctor,
Unless you have some special business with me ——

HERMANN, *with resolution.*

Most special, Sir! I had not else intruded.
The lady who was daughter of this house,
What dispositions will be made for her?

HERBERT.

Sir, you forget to whom you speak, — of whom.

HERMANN, *as before.*

No, I remember both. You had a claim
Upon this lady, which is now extinct.
She is left guardianless. To other hands
Must pass the trust that you have just laid down.
What hands more fit than those of her old tutor?
I know that you are in embarrassment.
I can deliver you. I will adopt her, —
Will take her with me to some Northern State.
She shall assume my name; shall be the wife
Of some dead son of mine; her child, my grandson.
Thus she will pass from sight, from memory.
You will be free to frame a new existence.
For us, we shall be simply foreigners.

No one will scan our former history,
Or doubt that we are other than we seem.
When time has softened her regrets to calm,
My daughter will be happy. Her strong heart
Will bear up bravely against this reverse.
She is not one of those who sink and faint,
But will take up the burden God appoints
With a courageous will.

[*More gently.*

And, credit me,
The tenderest father could not be more watchful,
More careful, more assiduous, more foreseeing,
Than I will be for her. Accept my offer!
All will be reconciled: your peace of mind,
Her happiness, the little boy's best good.

HERBERT, *aside.*

Rose ever impudence to such a pitch?
Helen his daughter! My own son his grandson!—
What do I say? O God, I have no son!
And Helen — I have not even now her love!
This vile old German has more claim than I!
He speaks the truth: she is more his than mine.

HERMANN.

Accept! accept! —

[*Aside.*

How shall I read his silence?
Is he ashamed to tell me he forsakes her?

HERBERT, *aside.*

And even for this she never shall be his.

HERMANN, *aside.*

Or is it rage at my audacity?

[*Observing Herbert.*

How will it turn? Ah, ill for you, my Helen!

HERBERT, *aside.*

Happy! he promise me she shall be happy!
Happy apart from me! hate me and happy!—
And there he stands, the meddlesome old pedant!
How shall I answer him? how put him off?

HERMANN.

Have you no answer for me yet? Accept!
All will be over in two days. Your mind
Will be at ease, your conscience satisfied.—

[*Aside.*

I 'll press him close. Sudden resolves are easiest.

HERBERT, *aside.*

Hear him! as if it were the simplest thing
For me to part from this unequalled creature
Who was till now the essence of my life!
How should he feel for me, the musty bookworm?—

[*Aloud.*

Have you so misinterpreted my silence?
Think not that I was pondering your advice;
I only sought how I might say politely

That which, however said, may sound but harsh.
I have no need of counsel or of aid;
I will myself be my own conscience-keeper;
I will myself guard my own ease of mind.
Your well-meant offer I decline, and beg
That my affairs may not detain you here.

HERMANN.

My own affairs detain me here. My pupil
Is in this house. You were till now her husband.
Had you retained your rights, I had been silent.
You lay them down, and here my charge begins.
The husband's claim being null, the rights of friendship
Resume their force. Two courses were before you:
Or to resign your wife and send her from you,
Never to meet with you again on earth,
Or to be true to her and share her exile.
It seems you could not make a sacrifice.

HERBERT.

Yes, — every sacrifice but that of honor!

HERMANN.

Honor? How shall I understand you? Honor?

HERBERT, *impatient and embarrassed.*

I cannot give the name of wife to one,
However lovely and however pure,
Whose birth is tainted. Exile I could bear,
Loss of wealth even I could bear for her.

[*Recovering his self-possession.*

But honor, — duty, — here I have no choice.
Could I myself resolve to bear the weight
Of a dishonored name, have I the right
To inflict it on my children, or to bring
My father's head in sorrow to the grave? —

[*Gloomily.*

No, — this misfortune is irreparable.
But God or Destiny arranged it thus.
I am not master of her fate or mine;
I do but take what 's sent me. If I bear
And keep my reason, 't is the most I can. —
Good morning, Sir.

HERMANN.

I understand you now:
You have not courage to be true to her,
Nor generosity to give her up. —

[*Aside.*

And yet he cannot ——

HERBERT.

Phrase it as you will.
Doctor, I do not want to quarrel with you;
But, if we are to keep on friendly terms,
This must end here. 'T has gone too far already.

HERMANN.

Sir, I have done. I have fulfilled my duty
In seeking you. Now I shall go to those

Who have the power, and I doubt not the will,
To adjust this matter righteously and kindly.
She who so long took Helen for her child
Must still have something of a mother's feeling;
And the mild Agatha has not come out
From the black depths of bondage, to desire
To plunge a sister in the fell abyss.

[*Goes.*

HERBERT.

All must be right by this time. They have trusted
The management of their affairs to Richard:
This with the rest. I have already spoken;
But I will put it out of doubt. — Not mine?
Absurd! impossible! — And others have
Over her fate the right I have no more?
Even she herself had never thought of this.
It was to me she pleaded, not to them. —
They must not see her, though. Weak, both of them.
They would give way before her strong appeal,
If pity won them not before she spoke.
They shall not hear her. — The old Doctor's plans
Will pass for what they are, a dotard's ravings.

[*Goes out.*

APPEAL.

SCENE III.

A garden. HERMANN *comes hastily along one of the walks leading from the house.*

HERMANN, *to himself.*

I have more courage than I thought I had.
I think I stood my ground. I rather like you,
To-day, Friend Hermann!

ALICE, *entering.*

Whence and whither, Doctor?

HERMANN, *aside.*

That selfish, frivolous girl! what sent her here? —
[*Aloud.*
I have grave business, Miss. I ask your pardon.
[*Attempts to pass.*

ALICE.

I have grave business.

HERMANN.

And with me?

ALICE.

With you.

HERMANN.

I were most flattered at another hour ;
But now time presses. I may be too late.

ALICE.

You are too late.

HERMANN.

For what?

ALICE.

For what you purpose.

HERMANN.

You cannot know. Excuse me.
[*Tries to pass.*

ALICE.

I do know.
You wish to rescue Helen. But the way
Is not the way you think of. I must show you.

HERMANN.

You?

ALICE.

You look doubtfully. You do not trust me.
You must. Look straight at me. You do not see
A serious purpose in my face?

HERMANN, *aside.*

Her air,
Her look is altered.

ALICE.

I am frivolous
And vain and selfish. All you think of me
I 'll tell you of myself. At least I am
No hypocrite, — if that be any merit,
When openness is only self-content
And carelessness of blame. I 'm frankly selfish.
But when I love, I love. I do love Helen.

HERMANN.

It sounds like truth.

ALICE.

It *is* truth. You must trust me.
We must be friends, — and more, must be allies.
You seek her who was once our Helen's mother.
It is in vain. She has bestowed full powers
On Richard Stanley. He will act for her
And the poor girl that he must own his niece.

HERMANN.

And her whom he was proud to call so once!
He cannot hate her!

ALICE.

He will show his kindness
By giving her to Herbert's charge. Already
This is decided. I am well-informed.

HERMANN.

What way is there ——

ALICE.

There is but one way, — flight.

HERMANN.

A desperate method!

ALICE.

Not so desperate
For who have friends and money. She has both.

HERMANN.

She has still friends left?

ALICE.

I foresaw all this
From the beginning, and reserved myself.
I have not been to Helen, — have not asked
After her fate, — have shown no interest
In any way. This seemed quite natural
For one so careless and so cold as I am.
But I have not been idle. I have written
To one who 'll not be slothful in this cause.
Do you your part! The answer that I wait for
Will be addressed to you. — Some accident
Might throw my letters into Herbert's hands. —
When you receive it, come to me at once.
It will trace out to us our course.

HERMANN.

And this
My unknown correspondent is ——

ALICE.

James Leslie.

HERMANN.

Your cousin's former tutor? A good man,
And worthy to be trusted.

ALICE.

He is more:
A generous, noble man. And in this case
He will have zeal greater than even compassion
Would wake in him, — though that would be enough
To lead him to face danger and reproach.

HERMANN, *aside.*

She can admire devotion. She is better
Than I supposed. I think that I may trust her. —
[*Aloud.*
There will be danger for this man?

ALICE.

Of course.
There will be danger for us all. You shrink?

HERMANN.

You wrong me. But I ask myself, Have we
A right to involve a stranger in our troubles?
Would Helen herself permit it, did she know it?

ALICE.

No doubt, not. But she will not know it. We

Must act for her, the prisoner and helpless.
We must dare all, — must give all.

HERMANN.

All our own, —
But must not do injustice. We love Helen;
We have a right to suffer for her. He ——

ALICE, *with emphasis.*

Has the same right as we.

HERMANN, *musingly.*

And he loved Helen?

ALICE.

Loved her, and loves. Such hearts as his change not.

HERMANN.

Did Helen know it?

ALICE.

No! — I had my reasons
For being clear-sighted. — No!

HERMANN.

Can you intrust her ——

ALICE.

As to a brother. Not the selfish love
Of common men is that he feels for her.

He knows himself as much divided from her
As ever, now. He loves without a hope,
Without a wish that he may find return, —
Since that return even must unshrine his idol.
He loves as — I love him. There, take my secret!
Now trust me! I can risk for her what most
I prize on earth!

HERMANN.

I trusted you already.

ALICE, *in her ordinary tone.*

That 's settled, then. Now to our separate work.
We must be ready, when the letter comes,
To act at once. I have the money here:
That is the first thing. A disguise is ready:
That is the second. You prepare yourself
For a long journey. You may not be wanted;
But get all ready. Not *too* secretly.
You 're not to go with her. She will be safer
Without your escort. But it may be useful
To lead the searchers off on a false scent.

HERMANN.

But how shall Helen, prisoner as she is,
Learn what we plan for her?

ALICE.

I 've cared for that.
I have my messengers, discreet and faithful.

HERMANN.

You think she will accept the part we give her?

ALICE.

At once.

HERMANN.

And yet it is a fearful thing
For a young woman to go forth alone——

ALICE, *bitterly.*

It is a fearful thing to be alone
On this harsh earth; and she must be alone,
Where'er she make her wandering or resting,
From this time forth: alone but for her child,
The unconscious sharer of her isolation.

HERMANN.

You will be left to her.

ALICE.

Not even I.
One short embrace and we have lost each other.

HERMANN.

Why should this be? Are you not rich and free?

ALICE.

Free? Is a woman ever so? Yes, free
To waste away her life in selfish folly!
But let her have a generous hope, an aim

Beyond the multitude, her prison-walls
Close round her pitiless. The captured bird,
Springing from crushingly caressing hands,
Seeks the blue height through the deceitful pane; —
He is our emblem; — ruthless beats him back
The cold, transparent, adamantine wall.

HERMANN.

None are quite free but one alone as I am.

ALICE.

I am an orphan. None have rights o'er me.
Were I a man now, one year more would give me
The power to follow her, the power to aid:
Nay, I might take it now, and none could hinder.
I have an ample fortune. My own money
Is not my own, and will not be, or only
To endow a husband, — never to enjoy it.
For trifling alms, for trinkets, silks, and laces,
I can have money; but for some good object
That I could put my soul in, never, never!
Only by false pretences, yes, by lying,
I 've gained the means of rescuing my friend;
And so on, to the end. Think you my husband,
The husband they will choose for me, will let me
Own my best friend in a poor wandering outcast?
You only, dear old man, are left to her.
And you are poor. Your poverty divides you
From her, as me my riches. Yet through you
I may, perhaps, find means to send her aid.
Heaven grants me this resource.

HERMANN.

No, not through me,
If gained by art, a woman's means!

ALICE.

A man's,
When he has savage foes to deal with, senseless
To reason, to compassion, and to right!
Bid me appeal to justice, to compassion;
Let me address the reason; and what then?
I 've put them on their guard, and lost the power
To serve my friend. She starves upon my candor
Who might have lived upon a generous falsehood.
A woman's means indeed! A human means,
Opposed to brutal! Is it in our choice?
Think you *I* choose it? I am frank and bold,
Yet can wind, if I must. But what sane man
Is bold where boldness would be desperation?
Does the most brave, most proud, disdain to cheat
His overpowerful enemy, the lion?
No; where superiority of strength
Is on one side, that of intelligence
Upon the other, each will use his weapon.

HERMANN.

Most dangerous sophistry!

ALICE.

Well, read your lessons
To generals of armies and to hunters!
Or keep them for our lawyers and our statesmen!

Or give them to the world in general!
I do but speak out what the others practise. —
But to our business. This can wait. You will not
Aid by a ruse the chance of her escape?

HERMANN.

I do not say that. I see no objection.
A ruse-de-guerre, a lawful stratagem.
Yes, I will undertake it, if it 's found
Expedient, when the moment comes. I am
At war now with this Herbert.

ALICE.

For this time,
Then, we can work together. In the future,
If you continue in a state of warfare,
You will, perhaps, find it in rule to have
A correspondent in the hostile camp?

HERMANN.

I see your drift; but there 's a difference.

ALICE.

Great! You 're a man, and I 'm a woman: all 's said.
You are a law unto yourself, and I
Must live by other people's consciences.

HERMANN.

But what is this that you are saying now
About continuing in the hostile camp?

What is this husband chosen by your friends?
Did you not even now confide to me
A choice already made, and by yourself?

ALICE.

My heart and my imagination chose
An object for their worship. Still and hidden
The little shrine will stand within my heart,
A sanctuary for my hunted soul
When strifes and follies leave no other rest.
I do not think to make this fane a kitchen,
And use the holy fire to boil and bake.

HERMANN.

To use the holy fire to warm and cheer
A human heart is not a desecration.
What after God is most divine is man.
That faculty which is the evidence
Of things unseen has not been given us
For solitary, seldom flights to heaven,
But to inform and elevate our lives.
Be truer to yourself. Guard not a shrine
For secret worship. So dispose your life
That what is purest, noblest in your heart
May rise to heaven from the household altar.

ALICE.

Almost you move me. But I know myself
Too well to let myself be borne away
Quite by your eloquence. I thank you warmly.

But I am of this earth. These rare ascensions
That you condemn are all the intercourse
I hold with higher spheres. Permit me these,
Nor let me grovel wholly. For the rest,
He whom I chose has chosen for his ideal,
The shrouded idol of his inmost heart,
Another object. Were it otherwise,
I hardly would expose his love and mine
To the rude wear and tear of daily life.
I know I am no worthy wife for him.
I 'm capable of sudden acts of virtue;
But of consistent, patient goodness, no.

HERMANN.

You wrong yourself, and you will wrong another,
If, having this affection in your heart,
You falsely promise love and faith elsewhere.

ALICE.

I am no hypocrite. The man I marry
Will live in no illusions more than I.
Plain common sense will regulate our contract.
Our fortunes are harmonious. That 's enough
To satisfy my friends and him. For me,
I have position, wealth, and — Leslie's fame.

HERMANN.

Why marry, though?

ALICE.

Because what little share

Of independence ever is a woman's
Is gained by marriage. I must wait ten years
To have the smallest share of freedom single.
Don't talk of me: I do not merit it:
Only through Helen can I interest you.

HERMANN.

No, — for yourself now. Hold me for your friend.
And grant me a friend's right to counsel you.
Do nothing rashly. You are young enough
To take your time.

ALICE.

At least there is no danger
The present moment. I am full of Helen,
And have no room for me. — Each to our part!

HERMANN.

Farewell, my new-found pupil!

ALICE.

Farewell, friend!
Friend of an hour, but for a life, I hope!
Whatever I am, whatever I do, my friend?
You must be pledged to this, if pledged to me.
I am too wild, too faulty, to dare trust
To my deserts to keep my friends, — too constant
To risk the pain of losing an affection
Once mine. Then those who love must love me only
Because they will, and because I will have them.
And now are we two friends?

HERMANN.

On any terms.
The faults of youth are all too pardonable
In the eyes of age; its confidence too charming;
The right to offer even neglected counsel
Too dear.

[*He extends his hand; she gives hers.*

Your friend, poor orphan girl, through all!

[*They part, and go out in different directions.*

APPEAL.

SCENE IV.

Room, of which the windows open on a long portico shaded with vines. EMMA *seated on a sofa; near her* AGATHA (*formerly* PERDITA) *stands in a timid attitude.*

EMMA.

Come sit by me, my pretty Agatha,
My little sister, — no, I mean my daughter.
At last I have a daughter! Oh, my child,
Why did I never see how sweet you were?

[*Taking Agatha's hand and drawing her towards herself. Agatha seats herself on a footstool close to Emma.*

How were you hidden by that ugly dress!
Could a dress hide a daughter from her mother?
But here at last!

[*Embracing her.*

What pretty, silk-soft hair!
How like to hers! You have her eyes exactly,
Only more soft, — perhaps not quite so bright.
How should they be? Oh, my poor injured child!
Hers would have dimmed in such a life as yours.

AGATHA.

Whose, mistress?

EMMA, *checking her.*

Mother!

AGATHA, *timidly.*

Oh, I dare not, — mother!
I have a mother! Oh, how great is God!
I prayed to Him that day that Dorcas told me
The hour would come. I prayed, "Oh, let it hasten!"
And that same night — oh, cruel night and dear! ——
Whom am I like? Whose eyes have I? Whose hair?

EMMA.

Hers, — my sweet sister's, — little Agatha's.

AGATHA.

And I am Agatha. There is another?

EMMA.

Not now, my treasure, — but there was another.
It is for her dear sake you bear that name.
And I can talk to you of her, my child!
You cannot tell what grief it is to hold
Your fondest thoughts imprisoned in your heart
And never give them voice.

AGATHA.

And you have known it?
I thought this grief was but for such as I.

EMMA.

My innocent child! Your heart has pined like mine
For a fond heart wherein to pour itself.
Now we shall be the world to one another!
You shall tell all your griefs: I will not tire

Of pitying you, nor you of asking pity.
And you will like to listen, when I talk
Of my young days and of my Agatha?

AGATHA.

I like to listen to your tender voice.

EMMA.

You have had all the sorrows of your life
In your first years; I, all my happiness —
Except that which you give me now — in mine.
I will divide my early joys with you,
And you shall halve with me your happy future.
So, I from memory, and you from hope,
Will weave a life without a cloud or shadow.

AGATHA.

Oh, rather tell me of your sorrows, mother!
Too blinding bright were such a life for me
To pass to from my darkness. Griefs like yours,
Tender and pure, will be to me like joys.
Oh, speak them! let me soothe them!

EMMA.

They are soothed.
Since I have held the living Agatha,
The memory of the dead one has grown fainter.

AGATHA.

I would not wrong the dead. Love her and me!

Your heart, like mine, can have one love on earth
And one in heaven? For she must be in heaven,
Your other Agatha?

EMMA.

She is in heaven,
With her dear mother.

AGATHA, *drawing close to Emma and speaking low.*

And with my dear child.
And they will love my child? will take it to them?

EMMA, *shrinking.*

Your child? Oh, Agatha, speak not of that!

AGATHA.

I must not speak of it? — not even to you?

EMMA, *with anguish, pressing Agatha's head to her bosom, and folding her arms over it, as if to conceal it.*

Oh, my poor ruined child! where shall I hide you?
A happy life for me? Oh, cruel dream! —
My child, we have a home! we have a refuge!
They call it here the South. But, oh, dear daughter,
There *is* a South, and I will bear you thither!

AGATHA, *alarmed.*

Whither?

EMMA.

Oh, far from here, — to happy Cuba!

AGATHA, *to herself.*

All must come true; and yet it was not I
Whom the curse meant.

EMMA.

We will leave all behind us, —
Even the memory of the bitter past.
In that bright land we will begin anew.

AGATHA.

Oh, mother, did you ever wrong to Dorcas?

EMMA.

Never, my child.

AGATHA, *timidly and hesitating.*

Or did — or did — my father?

EMMA.

Never.

AGATHA.

The curse was not for me!

EMMA, *anxiously.*

What curse?

AGATHA.

The curse she spoke, thinking me Hecate's child, —
The child of her who once had wronged her daughter.
And yet it all comes true.

EMMA.

Comes true?

AGATHA.

She said
I should go forth an exile, like her daughter;
My child should sleep uncared for, like her daughter's.

EMMA.

She has no daughter, — never had a daughter.
What know I of her daughter? daughter's child?
Exile? and is it exile, then, to pass
From lone bereavement to a mother's love?
Exile, to leave this poor monotonous country
For that rich land? When you have known its sky,
Its soft caressing air, its clustering flowers,
Whose brilliant hues thank the joy-giving sun
That blessed them into life: when you have known ——

AGATHA.

Oh, mother, let me stay! That joyful sunshine
Warms not his grave, those bright flowers deck it not;
That soft air never murmured with his tones;
That sky was never mirrored in his eyes!
If I were dead, and you were left alone,
Would you not better love the earth that held me,
Though it were drear and rude, than summer lands
That had no voice to speak to you of me?
And yet, oh, mother! yet I am not lovely.
The grave I fill will not be holy ground.

But he — he was so dear and beautiful!
He went from me in his first innocence!
Oh, let me stay!

EMMA, *bitterly.*

I have not found my daughter!

AGATHA, *penitent.*

Oh, mother, yes!

EMMA.

She is more lost to me
Than when that black disguise still hid her. Lost!
Lost even to her soul, my daughter!

AGATHA, *to herself.*

Lost!
Lost and forever! even to her soul!
Didst thou not know it, then, till now, my mother?
I have no choice. The word must be fulfilled.
Dorcas has other sight than common mortals. —
[*To Emma.*
Forgive, sweet mother, that, in this first hour
Of hardly tasted joy, I bring you sorrow!
Where'er you go, your child will go. Forgive! —
And will she go with us, your other daughter?

EMMA.

My other daughter?

AGATHA.

She who was your daughter.

EMMA.

She goes not with us.

AGATHA.

Nor her child?

EMMA.

Nor he.

AGATHA.

But is she not — but is she not my sister?

EMMA.

Your sister? No! Oh, do not break my heart!

AGATHA.

Did you not love her once?

EMMA.

I loved her then
When I believed she was my child. But now,
Now that I know that all the love she won
Was stolen from my poor deserted darling,
How can I love her? Speak of her no more!

AGATHA, *imploringly.*

Oh, mother dear, till you were given back,
The only one that ever showed me kindness!

EMMA.

Oh, call not up that sweet, deceitful image!
How was I mocked, how was I doubly mocked,

When in my arms I held that living lie!
Oh, let the past pass from me utterly!

AGATHA.

Only one little word! Where is she now?

EMMA.

Her fate is in the hands of one who loves her.
Her husband — he who was her husband — asked
Me to renounce my claims. I gladly yielded.
I would not have her future weigh on me.
Let her be happy, and let me forget her!

AGATHA.

You had a sister once. Why might she not
Love me, as you your little Agatha?

EMMA.

What need have you of any love but mine?

AGATHA.

And both together could not we love you
As you and Agatha your tender mother?

EMMA.

Your love contents me, — if, indeed, I have it,
And if mine but suffice my child.

AGATHA.

Suffice!
Your love! the love I hardly dare look up to,

It is so high above and I so humble!
Oh, mother, do not hurt me with such words!
You speak in sport? Oh, do not jest with me!
I am too dull to comprehend a jest, —
Too slow to answer fittingly. Speak plain,
And chide me openly, if you would chide,
Lest I but feel the pain and miss the meaning.

EMMA.

I cannot chide, — I am too weak to chide.
And even for that, my child, you must not wound me.
Your mother is too feeble for resentment.
You must deal tenderly with her.

AGATHA.

Forgive!
I will go with you where you will; will speak,
Be silent, as you will; will love but you;
Will let no other love me. But this once,
Oh, let me speak one word that might displease you!

EMMA.

That might displease me? Do not speak it!

AGATHA.

Mother!
That name of mother is so dear and sacred,
That it has power, even when falsely borne,
To cast a spell on me I cannot break.
Tell me of her who has been called my mother.

EMMA.

Oh, ask me not to speak that dreadful name!

AGATHA.

But tell me where she is? She does not suffer?

EMMA.

Suffer! How should she not, if God is just?

AGATHA.

And you will leave her to His justice? Man's
Revenge shall not pursue her?

EMMA.

Have I room
For thought of her? With what this week has taken,
What it has given, have I not enough? —
She is unharmed. Doubtless, in some dark corner
She hides her guilty, shame-bowed head. — Till now
The dead and the restored have filled my heart.

AGATHA.

In both their names I ask forgiveness for her.

EMMA, *gaspingly.*

In yours alone!

AGATHA, *eagerly.*

Then you will not deny me!

EMMA.

My heart holds no revenge. If crimes like hers
Admit of pardon ——

AGATHA.

It was for her daughter!

EMMA.

I have forgiven the dead. I will forgive her.

AGATHA.

You will protect her from the wrath of others?

EMMA.

I will take order, that, when I am gone,
No harm shall reach her.

AGATHA, *rising and taking her mother's hand.*

Let us forth, my mother!

EMMA, *rising with animation.*

Forth to my Cuban home!

AGATHA, *to herself.*

My Cuban grave!

[*They go out.*

TRAGEDY OF SUCCESS.

FLIGHT.

TRAGEDY OF SUCCESS.

FLIGHT.

SCENE I.

Night. The margin of a forest. HECATE, *wrapt in a dark cloak, her hair dishevelled, stands bending forward, as if in the act of listening.*

HECATE.

I dare not follow! My ill-boding step
Would guide misfortune to her track! — I dare not!

She is already far. Could my strong arm
Uphold her tender frame! Could my firm voice
Speak courage, when the loneliness and darkness
Press on her soul! Why am I not with her?
There is no other place for me on earth!

Alone! alone! her hesitating step
Shrinks before fancied dangers, seeks the real!
Were I but there! How quick my sharpened eye
To seize the tokens on our winding route!
How prompt my ear to catch the sound of danger!

Oh, stay thy step! 'T is not a harmless branch

Thy heedless foot would press! Oh, were I there
To snatch the deadly reptile from thy path!

Cool not thy thirst on that deceitful fruit!
It is thy foes' ally: it cheats to sleep
That will deliver thee to death or them!

Hast thou forgot the landmarks? Yonder, see!
Is the black stump whose sole remaining arm
Points downward to the narrow turfy ridge,
The way of safety through the quaking bog!

Further, the treacherous flood! how flat and still
It stretches out its tideless, waveless sea!
The giant growth that lifts from those dead waters
Its black luxuriance shrouds with moveless shade
Their slimy depths, accomplice of their guile!
About the margin of that stagnant ocean
Are set decoying vines, whose lusty stems
And wiry tendrils, hid in rank-grown leaves,
Far o'er the surface spread a tremulous bridge.
Her ignorant foot essays it! Hold thee back!
Oh, the next step is death!
Fly! fly! heed not
Whether thy pathway lie through fen or flood!
Fly, fly, poor loiterer! Hear'st thou not the tread,
Stealthy and swift, that follows on thy track?
It gains upon thee! Fly! the clutching hands
Are stretched to seize! almost they touch thee now!
Lost! lost!

[*She covers her face with her hands and shrinks down. Then, withdrawing her hands and rising slowly.*

For all these years I have not prayed!
Can I dare now? The punishment has fallen!
I am no more triumphant in my fraud!
May I not now ask Heaven's blessing on her,
On her the friendless, shelterless? The wretched,
Are they not Heaven's charge? — Oh, by that title
Even I might lift these miserable hands
And call for mercy! — Not for me! Too late!
But, if I did not fear to bring down wrath
Instead of promise, from these guilty lips
Should rise a prayer for her the innocent.
Oh, child, thou pay'st the forfeit of my crime! —
Was it a crime? Oh, who could look on her
And say that there she stood not in her place?
It was her right! I will not ask for pardon!

Oh, in a heart that was not framed for guilt
How cruel are these struggles! Wrong endured
And wrong committed claiming to be heard,
And each asserting mastery in its turn!

Oh, I am helpless! If I look not there,
What succor anywhere?

[*Raising her eyes and hands to heaven.*

Oh, guard Thy child!
She is not mine! This desecrated heart
Resigns a mother's claim! Dissolve the ties

That bind Thy seraph to a fallen spirit!
Her part is with Thy own!
It needs a victim
To expiate the heaped-up wrong? Behold one!
O God, I offer up my soul to torture!
Count nothing all my ruined years! count nothing
This mortal heartbreak! For each hour of life,
Of happy life, that Thou accord'st to her,
Give me a century of fiery pain!

FLIGHT.

SCENE II.

Morning twilight. A cleared space in the forest. Paths opening from it on the right and left. THERESA *enters from the right. She looks anxiously about her.*

THERESA.

He is not here. Oh, let not morning find me
Ere I find him! He said, "*Before the sun.*" —
Night draws around her, as she glides away,
Her wide gray mantle, leaving me all bare. —
Fail me not, thou! Oh, think, that, till we come,
She crouches comfortless or wanders guideless!
Come, then, our friend strong-couraged and strong-armed! —
"*Before the sun, beside the tree of trust.*"
Here is the smitten pine: it should have fallen,
But the green shoulders of its mates sustain.
Thou witherest, tree! they prop, but cannot quicken.
Oh, art thou there to tell my heart how vain
Is loving aid when Heaven's bolt hath stricken? —

[*She listens.*

A step! but not the sturdy one I wait for.

[*She conceals herself behind some trees. Enter* MELAS, *carrying a basket in his hand.*

MELAS.

She is not far. The way of fugitives
Is her way now. The world they leave is bitter,
But is their own. With many a backward turning
And many a pause, she seeks the foreign safety.
Strange ground is slow to tread, strange air breathes hard.
Thy will is feeble now as ours, poor lady!
Thou art more ignorant than one of us
Of all thou need'st to know! — The child! It loves me.
It faints for want of food!
I hear a rustling!
Does she lurk near? Does her ear strain to catch
A friendly sound?

[*Listens.*

Again! Push forward, Melas!
If you can aid, it must be ere the light,
That now is stealing onward like a spy,
Bursts on us with the broad, triumphant glare
Of the denouncer.

[*He discovers Theresa.*

What! you here, Theresa?

THERESA, *in an agitated manner.*

Go home, good Melas! it is time; you 're wanted.

MELAS.

No, it is early. It is here so fresh!
And nothing 's regular. I 'd not be missed,
If I should stay too long. But I shall not.

THERESA, *aside.*

What brings him here? It is the hour already!
He is no spy. What if I have to trust him? —
[*Aloud.*
Oh, Melas, go! You have no purpose here.

MELAS.

It is free time; this is the freest place;
Why not come here to spend it?

THERESA, *impatiently.*

Melas, go!

MELAS, *aside.*

She has a purpose, and she hardly hides it.
What if her purpose were akin to mine?
She is not wicked; she is only mad.
If I should try her? Yes, I will. — Theresa!
[*Theresa listens with an alarmed expression.*
This forest stretches far. You know its haunts
Hold dens and nests for things that creep and fly.
This is the hour when man is least abroad
And all that shuns his presence wakes and stirs.
See by that trunk the peeping reptile-head!
And that shy bird! I watch for such rare game.

THERESA.

You would not be more savage than the wild,
More black than night, to rob of this drear safety
What has no portion in free air and sunlight?

MELAS, *aside.*

She has grown human from the stone she was! —
[*Aloud.*
Listen, Theresa! There are stealthier things
Beneath the thicket, more averse to man.
If such come forth in search of food or comfort,
They meet no traitor eye?

THERESA, *smiling mournfully.*

In meeting mine?

MELAS.

Theresa, will you sing a hymn of signal?

THERESA.

Take voice, O Music, that this dreaming heart
Has toned so long in silence: soundless signal
Feigned for a senseless ear! To reach the living
Take voice, no longer listless of an answer!

THERESA, *sings.*

A shelter, men, a shelter! Oh, give him where to hide!
Give him what to the foxes, the birds, is not denied!

MELAS, *sings.*

Give him where to lay his head, the unprotected!

THERESA.

O Christ! O King of Glory! thus homeless didst Thou go!
Thou wast not too high for sorrow, as we are not too
low!

MELAS.

Earth had no heritage for Heaven's Elected!

THERESA.

But Thou wast born of woman! Didst Thou bear Thy bitter part,
And never know the failing of Thy mother's feeble heart?

MELAS.

When haters hunted, and when trusted ones rejected!

THERESA.

Oh, look on those who follow the path that once was Thine,
Their earthly hearts imploring as then did the divine!

MELAS.

Cast out, pursued, as Thou wast, but, oh, more faint, more lonely!

THERESA.

Thou, faithful and reproachless, couldst seek the Father's face!
We, full of sin and doubting, have no refuge but Thy grace!

MELAS.

We claim Thee, O Redeemer, by our bonds and sorrows only!

[*They stop suddenly, and look round in an attitude of listening.*

THERESA.

Listen!

MELAS, *looking into the wood.*

Who comes? No trembling fugitive!

THERESA.

Melas, it is that fearful woman, Dorcas!

MELAS.

She comes in rage; hear how the branches crack!

THERESA.

If she have heard us! If she have divined!

MELAS.

She can hear nothing but the snapping boughs
And her own muttered curses. Hide yourself,
If you have reason. Off, behind these trees!
I have no cause to fear, nor she to hurt me.

THERESA, *going, turns back.*

But, as you go, lift up a song of warning;
Lest the friends' call should prove the foes' decoy.

MELAS, *sings.*

The hunt goes out at morning! On the merry meeting-ground
Be ready bright and early, let none be lagging found!
We will stir up all that the silent forest covers!

My work is in the furrow that the sober plough has broke;
No beasts will I follow but those patient of the yoke.
I will leave at rest all that the peaceful forest covers.

You will not hunt the hidden? Are you brother to the bear?
Of the cubs are you tender in the old fox's lair?
For are not these all that the dusky forest covers?

Whatever takes man's bounty may fall beneath his blow;
Let him fetter what he fodders, and let the tameless go.
And may God care for all that the sheltering forest covers!

[*Melas disappears by one of the side-paths through the wood.* DORCAS *issues from the wood near the place where Melas and Theresa separated. She comes forward, and raises her clenched hands above her head.*

DORCAS.

Gone, passed from me, and I not dead, my vengeance!
She baffled even me! — O Father Satan!
Thou giv'st us only so much knowledge as
We need to serve thee, and keep'st back the rest
To mock us with when we have done thy work!
But I will not be mocked!
I *have* been mocked!
For twenty years I 've lived upon a dream!
Have I not thought I held her in my power,

The offspring of my enemy? I trod her
Under my feet; made her a slave of slaves.
She spied my mood, she shrank before my frown,
Soothed me with false caresses, taught her form
The servile cringe, her tongue the coward lie.
I have been cheated! while I cheered myself
Upon her misery, upon her debasement,
There was she throning it! Oh, twenty years!
For twenty years to have been fooled with thus!
It is a new account! — But patience! patience!
This poor old brain is not used up. And Fate,
And the Black Powers, and even Heaven itself
Are here upon my side: the fiends of vengeance
The messengers of justice, armed for me!
They tracked her out, the silent, sleepless ones!
She was struck down!
But she must fall still lower!
She wanders outcast, but she wanders free;
The brand of bondage has not reached her soul.
But I am here! O you who work with me,
Give to my hand the instrument it craves!

[EZEKIEL *enters by a path on the right. Dorcas perceives him, and stands awaiting his approach. When he comes near, she extends her arm, as if to arrest him.*

DORCAS.

You have been sent!

EZEKIEL, *trying to pass on.*

Let me perform my errand.

DORCAS.

Your errand is to me!

EZEKIEL.

Pass on, poor woman!
I can do nothing for you.

DORCAS.

I ask nothing.
I have to give. I do not beg of others.

EZEKIEL.

Now I bethink me, are you not the woman
Who came here with that fallen lady's mother?

DORCAS.

I came with Hecate hither.

EZEKIEL.

The same thought
Is now, perhaps, in both our hearts.

DORCAS.

Perhaps.

EZEKIEL.

She has escaped, — I know it. She has trusted
Her secret to her mother's friend, — to you.
You may confide in me. I will not fail you.
Not for the first time shall I track the forest,
Seeking the lair of the spent fugitive.

I know each bower, each cave, each grassy ridge,
Each turfy islet in the sea of swamp.

DORCAS, *eagerly.*

You know them all? — and you could track her out,
Even were she hidden beyond the scent of dogs?

EZEKIEL.

I would so. Fear not. Trust me. Without guide
The fugitive will find the pathless forest
An enemy as pitiless as man.
Time has been lost already. Look at me!
Am I of those that traffic their own blood?

DORCAS.

What blood is she of yours?

EZEKIEL.

What! is she not
Of our own people?

DORCAS.

Do you see it on her?

EZEKIEL.

Not on her face. But in her gentle heart,
Even while she shared the fortune of the haughty,
Her kindred with the humble was confessed.
We know it now; we know that inborn pity
For all that suffers, — no miraculous gift,

As once it seemed. She drew it with the blood
That flowed to hers from an afflicted heart.
She is of us; high-nurtured as she is,
She is of us; we must be prompt to succor.

DORCAS.

And if she were not? What if these fierce hellhounds
Hunt their own kind for once? What if their fangs
Are sharpened now for a related breast?
Would you mislead them? Would you call them off?

EZEKIEL.

I would snatch any victim from the power
Of the unjust. This is not now the question.
We know that she is one of us. As such
Is she now orphan, homeless, friendless. Hasten!
Give me the clue! Before to-morrow's dawn
I will have led her to a place of safety.

DORCAS.

You? you, Ezekiel? She is in the forest,
As you suppose. I know it not from her;
Enough I know it. You shall track her out,
As you have promised.

EZEKIEL.

Went she out alone?

DORCAS.

Alone or worse: incumbered with her child.

EZEKIEL.

She entered on which side?

DORCAS.

I cannot tell you.

EZEKIEL, *going.*

I will soon know.

DORCAS, *retaining him.*

Not yet! Ezekiel, stay!

[*He tears himself from her grasp.*

Fernando, stay!

EZEKIEL, *with strong emotion.*

Who calls me by that name?

DORCAS.

One who has known you other than you are, —
Not in name only.

EZEKIEL.

You have known me?

DORCAS.

Yes.

EZEKIEL.

And in that time ——

DORCAS.

When she you loved yet lived.

EZEKIEL.

Lived, and for me! And now she lives, but only
Not now for me! — And you have known her, Dorcas?

DORCAS, *her face losing its expression of bitter defiance; her shrill tone changed to one deep and solemn.*

Yes. She is dead; and thou shalt see her grave.
Hast thou the courage? Speak!

EZEKIEL, *with anguish.*

Her grave is far.
Oh, mock me not! I shall not look on it.

DORCAS.

Thou shalt and soon, hast thou indeed the courage.
What grave hast thou imagined for the gay one?
A laughing grave, that the kind Cuban summer
Tends with untiring piety, renewing
Above it still the ever-varying tribute
Of brilliant cluster, tender-twining wreath?
A peaceful grave, where the descending sunbeams,
The waving leaf, the softly bending grass,
In the deep quietness alone are restless?
Hast thou imagined for the one thou lov'dst
A grave like this? By such a resting-place
The heart might lay its griefs down, its regrets,
Its vengeance even. Not to such a grave
Shall I bring thee, Fernando! Art thou firm
To follow where I lead thee?

EZEKIEL.

If to her.

DORCAS.

Hear, then! — But first, art thou indeed Fernando?
Art thou that wronged Fernando, he who once
In helplessness appealed from man to Heaven, —
Who, kneeling in the presence of the sun,
Gave God in charge to execute his vengeance?

EZEKIEL.

I was that impious man.

DORCAS.

Not thus He judged,
The Being thy despair invoked. The vengeance
Thou askedst at His hand His hand has wrought:
The winds and waves have ministered to thee;
The tyrant's passions, as untamed as they,
Have, even as they, been made thy instruments;
The traitor's greed has worked thy will, not his;
All that the heaven commands of most resistless,
All that the earth contains most unsubjected,
Has bent itself to carry out thy curse!
And when at last its force seemed spent, when one
Of its doomed victims baffled for a time
The slackened chase, ah, see, it steals on her,
Makes of her nearest, of herself, its tool,
The child and mother giving mutual ruin!

EZEKIEL.

What wouldst thou tell me, woman?

DORCAS.

Thou perceiv'st not?
Hear it again! This woman thou wouldst save
Is thy own victim. Thou hast cast her down
From her high place. For thee she bears the brand
Of slave, of outcast.

EZEKIEL.

Wretched man! for me? —
The truth is in thy words. I feel it, though
Their perfect sense escapes me. By what tie
Is her fate linked to mine?

DORCAS.

By that of hate.
When on that day, her last of happiness,
Some strange attraction lured thee to her presence,
Thee, who shunn'st happiness, who shunn'st the happy,
And thou stood'st face to face with her a moment,
Did then the glance of those joy-lighted eyes
Bring from the past no eyes as dark, as bright,
Though wrath, not pleasure, kindled them for thee?
In the clear ring of that imperial voice
Did no dead tones revive upon thy ear? —

[*She looks at him fixedly, for a few moments.*

Blinded as I was! With my eyes I saw,
With my ears heard, with my mind's senses not. —

Blind as thou wast, unconscious as thou wast,
That moment was her fate. Fernando's shadow
Passed then between her and the sun!

EZEKIEL.

My presence
Is, then, so blighting?

DORCAS.

To the race of him
Who was thy blight.

EZEKIEL.

And she is of his race?

DORCAS.

She is the daughter of his child.

EZEKIEL, *starting.*

Of *hers?*

DORCAS.

Wouldst thou, then, hate her?

EZEKIEL.

I would rescue her.

DORCAS.

No, no! The cherished, the triumphant wife
Was mother to that miserable Hecate
Who baffled me, — but did not baffle Fate!

EZEKIEL, *with amazement.*

How here, and thus?

DORCAS.

Fernando, through thy curse!
The thunderbolt of heaven reached thy foe
Upon the sea. The vessel wrecked for him
Bore on its shattered fragments to the shore
A wretched few: among these few a widow,
Two little children, and their faithful nurse:
With these a man whom thou hast known: the agent,
For evil and for good, of him who perished,
Until Fate made him thine, — thine and Pamela's.

EZEKIEL.

Oh, spare that name!

DORCAS.

Thou must endure to hear it.
Through Fate he was thy agent and Pamela's.
Hast thou yet comprehended me?

EZEKIEL, *covering his face.*

Too well! —

[*Looking up.*

Oh, life and strength but to undo this work!
Pamela! let me swear it by thy grave,
If thou hadst part in this most hideous treason,
I will atone it! Thy repentant spirit
Shall see the evil that it wrought made good,
And pass to peace! —

[*To Dorcas.*

Lead me, as thou hast promised,
Unto her grave.

DORCAS, *standing erect and throwing out her arms.*

Behold, thou stand'st before it!
What sepulchre a crumbling human ruin
May furnish to a dead and damnèd soul,
That sepulchre is Dorcas to Pamela!

[*She stands silent a moment, while he gazes in horror.*

Here offer up thy vows! here breathe forgiveness!
Here receive peace and give it!

[*Ezekiel, recovering from his stupor, attempts to turn away.*

Turn not hence!
Thou wouldst refuse belief that yet thou giv'st!

[*Ezekiel remains with his eyes fixed on her, as if unable to withdraw them.*

Gaze on! My look has fascination yet, —
Though now its spell be not of love, but horror.
Look in these eyes, whose baleful gleam recalls
The ghastly glitter flickering round decay!
These are the eyes that danced with joy and love
Once at thy step. Behold these grisly fingers,
That seem the talons of a bird of prey!
These are the fairy hands that hid themselves
In thy broad grasp. Gaze! gaze! this face, this all,
This was Pamela! this was thy Pamela!

EZEKIEL.

Oh, only not that name!

[*He stands as if struggling with himself, then lifting his eyes and hands to heaven.*

Thou wilt take from me
All, even to memory!

[*Clasping his hands in anguish.*

Last and sharpest trial,
Shall I sustain thee?

DORCAS.

Would I were more hideous,
More loathsome still, if more were possible,
That I might shriek to thee more maddening, —
"This is what *he* has left thee of Pamela!"

EZEKIEL, *solemnly, looking upward.*

Send me the strength, O God, that send'st the proof! —

[*To Dorcas, in a low voice, frequently interrupted.*

O thou in whom I would not see the lost,
Yet must! O thou, that, robbed from me, took'st with thee
My youth, my sunlight, — rendered to me, bring'st
A second ruin deeper than the first!
Oh, in what language shall I speak to thee?

[*Compassionately.*

How can I blame thee that thy slender bark
Was wrecked, when even this strong hulk was shattered?
Dorcas! Pamela! We have suffered, both;
Both we have sinned. Let us redeem together
What yet is to redeem.

DORCAS.

I have not sinned:
I have done justice. But revile me, wreak
On me the vengeance that thou lack'st the heart
To visit on its proper heirs! 'T is well
I waited not for thee! 'T is well this hand,
This brain, sufficed to my revenge without thee!
What is there to redeem? Canst thou redeem
Thy youth and mine, — thy innocent love and mine?

EZEKIEL.

Oh, by that love which, withered on this earth,
May yet retake its bloom beyond the stars ——

DORCAS.

Well didst thou say, — "*Not even memory!*"
He did not wrong thee half: thy foe took from thee
What not eternity can give thee back.
I will not lie to thee. Pamela's life
Broke not like thine with breaking of those ties. —
That lordly look! that voice whose lightest tones
Had more command in them than others' threats!
Oh, he was born that I should call him master!
I loved him. I forgot you. — Then *she* came.
I fell from queen to nothing. — Not enough!
The memory of my day must pass with me.
My thought must die. No shadow from my night
Must cross her sunshine. And they tore from me
All that was left to me of mine and his.
They tore from me my child! They left me there
To live unloved, and live without my child!

EZEKIEL.

He sent thy child from thee?

DORCAS.

The act was his;
The guilt was hers. I never hated him
For it, but her. — Canst thou redeem me this?
Canst thou redeem me this? Canst thou give back
The childhood of my daughter, — those sweet years
Of her young life of which my life was robbed?

EZEKIEL.

Oh, thou most wronged, most suffering! believe not
Reproach of mine shall add its bitterness
To thy full cup! For me, the last is borne.
Heaven has left for me no greater trial.
It will soon call me home. The little space
I have to work in would I give to thee.
Oh, might I but atone for thee, with thee!

DORCAS.

Thou speak'st to stone! Art thou divine, almighty?
Canst thou create a heart in this void breast?
Work thy first miracle! the rest were light.

EZEKIEL.

Let it suffice that he who wronged thee fell
By Heaven's judgment. Let the innocent ——

DORCAS.

"*On him and his*": thus didst thou word thy curse.

EZEKIEL.

I will revoke it! I will make amends!

DORCAS.

Thou hast no power. Then, when thou mad'st appeal
To the Avenger, when thou laid'st thy cause
In His untrembling hands, thou left'st no room
For the relentings of a faltering mortal.

EZEKIEL, *going.*

Thou wilt not aid me? Then, if not with thee,
Without thee, it must be. — And yet — once more ——

DORCAS.

Go, work thy fate out, miserable man!
Leave me to mine! But think not, thou that thrust'st
Thy daring hand in the eternal scales,
That thou shalt make them swerve. The doomed is doomed.
Thou canst but scatter round thee wider ruin,
And add new victims to those marked already.

[*He goes; she follows him with her voice.*

Thou that wouldst be more just than God, beware!—

[*Dorcas follows the retreating figure of Ezekiel with her eyes, and sees him joined by Theresa. She watches them until they disappear among the trees.*

His errand was to her! They plot together.
But I will circumvent them! —

[*She sees* Boaz, *who enters from the path on the right.*

Boaz, you!

The famous preacher has just passed along, —
Ezekiel: you know him?

BOAZ.

Famous preacher!

DORCAS.

They call him so. He 's strong, but wants the doctrine.
Not so?

BOAZ.

You have more wit than many wiser.

DORCAS.

Ah, I can make distinctions. But what brings him
Here, think you, now?

BOAZ.

No good.

DORCAS.

Why, that is certain.
But what? It were worth something now to bring
That knowledge to its market. Ah, I know
Your talents, Boaz. The persuading tongue
Is not the sole or first. The hearing ear
Has done good service to yourself and others.

BOAZ.

You know?

DORCAS.

There is not much I do not know.
You are a useful man, but never yet
Has such occasion shown itself to you
For winning praise and gain. You know that woman
Who lorded it so long here, — Hecate's daughter?
One of ourselves; — and she must rule it here!
And she must play the gracious! grant us favors,
Send us good things, inquire about our ailments!
So condescending! Oh, the insolent minx!
I could go mad, were I not mad already!

BOAZ.

What would you have? Is she not down? Her pride
Has proved the pride that goes before destruction.

DORCAS.

Her like are never half-destroyed; scotched, trampled,
They struggle out again to life and luck.

BOAZ.

I do not hate her. She has never harmed me.

DORCAS.

Nor ever helped you. In her power and riches
What did she do for you? Her misery
Can profit you far more than her abundance.

BOAZ.

Can profit me?

DORCAS.

If you yourself but will.
You know that she has fled?

BOAZ.

Impossible!

DORCAS.

Certain! Is that a thing to be allowed,
Think you? And what reward will be for him
Who brings the audacious one to penitence?

BOAZ.

What reward, then? Suppose.

DORCAS.

The very least
Will be to pass his lifetime without work.
And then the presents and the privileges!

BOAZ.

How should one willing have a chance at these?

DORCAS.

He shall track out this plot. He shall discover
The path she took at first; he shall betray
Her resting-places, her disguises.

BOAZ.

How
Shall I betray where I have not been trusted?

DORCAS.

This was not done without accomplices.

BOAZ.

All who surrounded her would die for her.

DORCAS, *with meaning.*

All? Are there none who have another duty,
Another love, than to their fallen mistress?

BOAZ, *aside.*

She knows even that! She knows that Chloe ——

DORCAS.

Go!

Go to your work! You need no help from me.
You know your trade. You 're no beginner at it.
But first: you saw those dark, escaping figures?
To the discretion of the silent forest
They trust their trembling secret. They shall learn
That even the trees turn traitors, when I will it.
Upon their track! Glide like the noiseless serpent,
Wind like the subtle air, and bear away
Their words as lightly and as unsuspected.
When you need counsel, come to me.

BOAZ.

I go.

[*Boaz goes.*

DORCAS.

And that Theresa! There is in her look
Something in league with my possessing demon.
When her dim, unregarding eye turns on me,
The storm begins to brew within. O Master,
Thou find'st thy agents where thou wilt! A tree-trunk
Sending the shadow of its blasted form
Across my path; a dance of withered leaves
To the shrill autumn blast; a lonely crag,
From which, with roots uptorn, a fair young birch
Hung slowly withering: all these have been
Thy messengers to me ere now. This girl,
Brain-cracked like me, but not like me possessing
A higher sense in payment of the lost, —
This girl, how often has she, all unconscious,
Brought me thy promptings! When my age-cooled blood
Has slugged and thickened, and almost my will
Had let itself be lulled, her wandering look,
Or even from afar her half-seen form,
Has sent a quick thrill through my stiffening veins
And braced me to my work. And it is she
Who, at this moment, dares to cross my path,
And set her feeble madness against mine!

[*With a gesture of menace, she goes out.*

FLIGHT.

SCENE IV.

A highway through a desolate region. On either side the road, blackened stumps of trees. A large uprooted pine beside the road. HELEN *enters, carrying her child.*

HELEN.

I will take rest. This fallen pine-tree offers
Its friendly trunk. My strength is unexhausted,
But it is prudent to forestall fatigue. —

[*Looking at her child.*

He sleeps. He trusts in me, and I in God. —

[*Looking upward devoutly.*

O Thou great Parent, who hast led my steps
Amid a thousand snares thus far in safety,
Thou wilt not leave me now! I feel Thy hand
Supporting and protecting. Without Thee,
How could I, timid, ignorant, and feeble,
Have wound my way amid strange men and scenes
With a calm face, clear sense, and untired frame? —

[*Looks on her child.*

How oft, sweet sleeper, in my days of ease,
When I have carried thee a little hour
Through the smooth walks of what was then my garden,
My wearied arms have asked for aid! — and now
All night I walk the rugged, dreary road,
And in the daytime, crouching in some hollow,

Or hidden in a thicket's tangled depths,
I hold thee still, and hardly dare to catch
An hour of troubled sleep, lest I should wake
To find thee no more there, — yet, unfatigued
And strong of heart, I still hold on my way! —
[*Looking upwards.*
Oh, not my own, from Thee this strength is sent!
[*Rising.*
Almighty Father, hear my humble prayer!
This life, which Thou till now hast crowned with blessing,
So that my few years hold the happiness
Of a long, long career, to Thee I give it!
The faults of those to whom I owe existence
Demand atonement. Let me offer it!
Let want and care, let ceaseless toil and hardship
Become my portion! or, if so Thou deemest,
Let me at once complete the sacrifice,
And lay me down in an uncared-for grave!
But, oh, protect for me this innocent head!
Let the imputed guilt expire with me,
The curse die out before it reaches him!

When for the first time I beheld his face
And felt his soft cheek on my happy breast,
Inly did I devote him to Thy service,
Thou God of love and truth! Accept the vow!
Let this subsist, though all the rest were fleeting;
Let this alone of all my hopes be crowned!

God! if I asked amiss, when I implored Thee

To turn away from him the earthly ill
That I accept with meekness, oh, forgive
The mother's frailty, nor, for this presumption,
Reject that earlier prayer that all embraced!
Take him as Thine! With faith I yield him up.
His way be bright or clouded at Thy pleasure,
Let but the path he follows lead to Thee! —

[*The sound of a carriage is heard.*

The sound of carriage-wheels! Hark! Nearer! nearer!
At this late hour, upon this lonely road,
What travellers are these, and what their errand?
The moon shines clear, — no tree, no hiding-place!
I must walk firmly on and brave the danger.
Does my fate seek me with these coming wheels? —
The carriage stops; some one descends and follows. —
O God, look down on us! we have but Thee!

[*Helen walks on.* LESLIE, *who has descended from the carriage, enters and follows her.*

LESLIE.

Fear not! I come to serve you, not betray.

HELEN, *stopping.*

You know me?

LESLIE.

Yes: you have forgotten me?

HELEN.

Your name I have forgotten; pardon me.

LESLIE.

James Leslie, tutor to your father's nephew.
Four years have passed. My face is strange to you.
The time is short for explanations. Trust me
Upon the faith of your own noble soul.
I see that you confide in me. Then hasten!
With morning's dawn you shall be placed in safety.

HELEN.

Till morning dawn you will remain in danger.

LESLIE.

I am commissioned by your friend.

HELEN.

What friend
Did me this wrong, to set another life
On the same cast with mine? Return! return!
Nor lay the burden of another grief
Upon a heart too heavy-laden!

LESLIE.

Hear me!
Not rashly, not presumptuously, I offer
An unasked aid. Your earliest, truest friend
Consigned to me this charge. I have assumed it.
Though you refuse to ratify my claim,
I cannot lay it down. I share your danger,
Though you permit me not to aid your safety.
I have not come alone: a trusty guide,

Whose life may answer for this deed, conducts me.
A woman, who, through love of you, has dared
The guilt of flight, the danger of recapture,
Awaits her fate in yours. Reward their truth:
Let them be saved with you. Or, if we fail,
Let them enjoy at least the martyr's solace,
The suffering in a noble cause, — not waste
Their lives on a despised, rejected service.

[THERESA *enters; she takes the child silently from the arms of the mother and clasps it to her bosom.*

HELEN.

Have I no choice? Oh, spare me, generous man!
Leave, then, these two, whose fate is bound with mine.
Let us pursue our way together. You,
Who risk no danger when apart from us,
Leave us. At least your ruin spare me!

LESLIE.

These
Are here upon my faith. You will not ask me
To fly the danger I myself prepared?

HELEN.

I have no choice! —

[*To Theresa.*

My poor Theresa, come!
Is, then, thy love so true? —

[*Theresa seizes the hand of Helen and presses it to her lips. At a signal from Leslie, a man approaches, in whom Helen recognizes* EZEKIEL.

It is the preacher!
Why is he here?

EZEKIEL.

This work was given me.
Delay not, for my time is short. Behold,
The night is near, wherein no man can work!

[*They all go out in the direction of the carriage.*

TRAGEDY OF SUCCESS.

PURSUIT.

TRAGEDY OF SUCCESS.

PURSUIT.

SCENE I.

Room in the house at Belrespiro. HERMANN. HERBERT, *who holds a paper in his hand. They are seated at a table on which lie papers.*

HERBERT.

I 'm glad to have my own convictions strengthened
By your opinion. See, the proofs he brings me
Agree in every point with memoranda
Found among Stanley's papers. Years ago
He made, at the entreaty of his daughter,
A diligent investigation into
Poor Hecate's antecedents.

HERMANN

Yes, it was so.
I was consulted, and knew every step.
[*Pointing to some of the papers on the table.*
These memoranda are in my handwriting.
[*Taking up others.*
These papers are in Helen's. They contain

Poor Hecate's narrative. The leading facts
Agree with his confessions. Of the shipwreck
She made no mention.

HERBERT.

Could she have forgotten?

HERMANN.

Improbable. She yielded to the longing
To make her story known, — her claim to freedom;
But shrank from wholly lifting up the veil
That hid her origin. She gave no aid
To our endeavors. When our pressing questions
Led her to apprehend a serious purpose
To look into her statements, she was silent.
And now! ——

HERBERT.

If you made one more trial?

HERMANN.

Fruitless!
Her brain has borne the last. It could escape
From suffering only by laying down
The power to suffer. She sits mild and still,
And, with a quiet smile, gives like assent
To every question.

HERBERT.

A new grief for Helen!

HERMANN.

But to the wretched sufferer herself
This calm oblivion comes like Heaven's pardon.

HERBERT.

You think there is no hope of cure?

HERMANN.

No hope.
On her numbed brain the deadening weight will rest
During her earthly years, her years of penance.
Death will release her first. Her sleeping soul,
Its expiation past, will wake to peace. —

[*Hermann remains silent a few moments; then extends his hand for the paper which Herbert holds, takes it and examines it.*

I always hoped, that, soon or late, the clue
To guide us in our further search would offer.
We got three stages on the road, no more. —

[*Examining the papers.*

Yes, here 's the name of that slave-trader; here
That of the man he had them from; and here —
Yes, here 's the third. —

[*Takes a paper from the table and compares the two.*

The same. This man, this Woodford,
Beginning at the other end, arrives
At the same point where our researches failed;
Thence tracing backwards the same road we followed,
Here comes upon the objects of his search.
He held the first link, as we had the last;
And now, between us, see the chain completed!

HERBERT.

There is no moral doubt. The legal proofs ——

HERMANN.

We shall complete them. This man's deposition
Has all been taken down and duly witnessed.
I have had care of that. — And now for Dorcas.
Her testimony has no legal worth,
But her confession of complicity
Would bring strong confirmation to our minds.
She is still obstinate. 'T is hard to find
A way to work on her perverted will.

HERBERT.

Persuasions, promises, are lost on her.
Threats ——

HERMANN.

Worse than useless. We must try to find
Her master motive: with that key we open
The locked cells of her breast. It were in vain
To try to force an entrance, or to win one
By indirect expedients. We must have
The veritable clue, or waste our efforts.
Woodford said something of an injury
She thinks herself to have received. In this
May be the key to her mysterious conduct:
For no advantage to herself has come,
It seems, from all her crimes. Let her be sent for.
We will confront her with this man once more.
Leave me to question her. If once we touch

Upon the burning spot, the hidden pain
Will quick reveal its presence.

HERBERT.

We can try.

HERMANN.

The springs of action in barbarian natures
Are very simple. In the cultured races,
The moral structure, mental apparatus,
Become more complex. The expanded brain,
Whose delicate fibres vibrate ceaselessly,
Thrilled by a myriad shifting influences,
Is subject to surprises and to failures
Which the strong, rugged engine of the will
And plans of the barbarian does not know.
We cannot boast the singleness of purpose,
The long endurance, and the self-control
Which mark the savage; but he oftener
Becomes the victim of a master passion
That rules him and betrays him at its will. —
But Dorcas is not all barbarian. She
Has a large share of cultivated blood.
We have a sharp intelligence to combat, —
Only made sharper by the trace of madness
That lurks in it. We must move warily. —
Woodford has been already summoned?

HERBERT.

Yes.

And here he is.

[WOODFORD *is ushered in by a servant. He is pale and emaciated; his manner depressed and humble. Herbert regards him with scorn; Hermann with compassion.*

HERBERT, *to the servant.*

Send Dorcas here at once! —

[*To Woodford.*

And you persist in this strange tale you tell?

WOODFORD.

'T would not avail me to retract it now.

HERBERT.

But have you talked with Dorcas? Have you made her
Confess her guilt yet?

WOODFORD.

I have done my best
To draw her on to speak, but all in vain.
She tells me I am mad, or does not answer.
She never will be brought to a confession.

HERBERT.

But we must have it. You must get it from her.

WOODFORD.

I would undo a portion of the ill
That I have done, before I seek the grave
That waits for me. My days, I know, are numbered.
What lies in me I 've done. This woman's madness
Or obduracy is beyond my force.

HERMANN.

We will have one more trial.

[*To Herbert.*

You 'll allow me

To act inquisitor?

HERBERT.

I trust your skill.

[DORCAS *enters, and curtsies profoundly.*

HERMANN, *aside.*

Her countenance is not encouraging.

HERBERT.

Come near and answer all the Doctor's questions.
Straight, mind! No dodging! Look him in the face.

HERMANN, *to Dorcas.*

Dorcas, you know this man?

DORCAS.

I 've seen him.

HERMANN.

Where?

DORCAS.

Here, yesterday.

HERMANN.

And not before?

DORCAS.

Perhaps.
I have seen many people in my days.
He 's not so marked that I should keep his likeness.

HERBERT.

Have you not seen him many years ago?

DORCAS.

Perhaps, — I cannot say.

HERMANN.

Perhaps in Cuba?

DORCAS.

I cannot say. My memory is weak.

HERMANN.

Weak for late things, — but those passed long ago,
Are they not graven deeper?

DORCAS.

To my sorrow!

HERMANN.

Search, then, and find the image of this man.

DORCAS.

He is not there. He is not worth it.

HERBERT, *to Woodford.*

Are you
Sure that this is the very woman?

WOODFORD.

Yes.
She is much changed; but she revealed herself,
And left no doubt of her identity.
She spoke of things known but to her and me.

HERBERT.

This woman was your sole accomplice, then?

WOODFORD.

The only full accomplice. There were men
Who guessed at wrong, though not at all the wrong, —
As I have told you, — who had doubts, at least,
As to the clearness of my property
In those I sold.

HERBERT.

But as to their condition
And race suspected nothing. —

[*To Hermann, aside.*

These will have
No motive to withhold their testimony.
It will not criminate them. This man absolves them.

HERMANN.

We will collect it with all due precautions,
Not to alarm them. We shall have it. Now ——

HERBERT, *to Woodford.*

Then in that crime most heinous, sacrilegious,
Of giving up to misery and debasement
Those precious lives that fiends might have respected,
You had no other tool, associate,
Than Dorcas here?

WOODFORD.

No other.

HERBERT, *aside to Hermann.*

She alone
Can tell us all we want to know.

HERMANN.

Have patience.
Let me interrogate. Do not alarm her.
You only drive her into sullen silence. —
[*To Woodford.*
Tell in her presence all you know of her.

WOODFORD.

She was a favorite slave, and much indulged.
She had some talents, danced and sang well.

HERBERT.

Dorcas?

WOODFORD.

Pamela she was called then. You could not,
Seeing her now, dream what that creature was

Some forty years ago. So gay and graceful,
So soft and winning, when she would! They called her
The little fairy, for her grace and lightness.
Ah, that was long ago!

HERMANN.

Has she left children
In Cuba?

WOODFORD.

No, — I think she had no children,
Except a daughter, given to Miss Emma, —
Miss Emma Fortescue, now Mrs. Stanley. —
She must have found her daughter here again,
If she be living.

DORCAS, *to herself.*

Living? — with Miss Emma?

HERMANN, *to Dorcas.*

Have you a daughter?

DORCAS, *with excitement.*

Have I? Tell me, have I?
Give me my daughter, and I 'll tell you all!

WOODFORD.

If she be living, you have known her here.

DORCAS.

No, — there is no one here so beautiful.
No, — there is no one here who sings so sweetly.

HERBERT.

There is a woman who came here from Cuba
With Mrs. Stanley.

HERMANN.

It is that Theresa,
Who at this moment ——

DORCAS, *with sudden illumination.*

Yes! it is Theresa!
Theresa is my child! Oh, save her! save her!

HERBERT, *to Woodford.*

Was her child's name Theresa?

DORCAS.

Not her name:
It is herself! it is herself!

WOODFORD.

Her name,
The name she had at first, was changed, I think.
The new name was —— But here I have some minutes
From my old books of all that could concern ——

[*Takes out a pocket-book and examines papers.*

Theresa, — yes, — accompanied Miss Emma.

HERMANN.

Pamela did not know ——

WOODFORD.

'T was kept from her

To save her feelings. She was left to think
Her child would soon come back, — next day, — next week.
She thought her on a neighboring plantation.
Thus time wore on and her grief passed away.

DORCAS, *falling on her knees.*

I will confess! Oh, only listen to me!
I am Pamela! I did all he says! —
And more! — and more! But only give her back,
And I will undo all!

HERBERT.

Where is Theresa?

HERMANN.

Fled with ——

HERBERT.

With — Helen?

HERMANN.

Yes. —

[*To Dorcas.*

She is in safety.

HERBERT, *uneasily.*

I gave strict charge to those who followed them
To use no force, to give no cause for scandal,
But to bring back ——

HERMANN.

Have no uneasiness.

They will not be brought back, but they may come back
When this is all made clear, — if you desire it:
They will not be brought back. They 're safe ere this.
Your messengers have followed a wrong track.
[*Smiling.*

HERBERT.

You were a party? — Ah, I thought as much!
Your sudden absence ——

HERMANN.

You 'll forgive me now?

HERBERT.

The more, that I was not deceived: the course
You took gave me in fact the clue.

HERMANN, *laughing.*

Indeed!

Well, we shall see. —
[*To Dorcas, kindly.*
She 's safe.

DORCAS, *still on her knees.*

Oh, master!

HERBERT.

Peace!

DORCAS, *in extremity of anguish.*

There are more hounds upon their track than yours.
I set them on, — I set them on my child!

HERMANN, *alarmed.*

What do you say?

DORCAS.

Oh, save her! Save Miss Helen,
And my child with her! Save her!

HERBERT.

Save? — from what?

DORCAS.

How do I know? Save them from stripes, from chains,
From brutal jailers!

HERBERT.

Peace, madwoman!

DORCAS.

No!
You would not hear my words; you mocked at me.
I offered you my guidance: you refused it.
I went to those who listened, — sold the news
I offered you for nothing. He set forth
Upon the track I pointed out.

HERBERT, *impatiently.*

He? — who?

DORCAS.

I thought to strike my latest blow at Hecate,
And through her stabbed my child!

HERMANN.

And Hecate knew ——

DORCAS.

'T was the last thing she knew.

HERBERT, *furiously.*

Who set forth? *Who?*

DORCAS.

Ezekiel's master!

HERMANN.

That remorseless man!
He stops at nothing!

[*Dorcas falls forward insensible.*

HERBERT, *to a servant.*

Drag her out! — My horse
Without delay!

[*Woodford and the servant remove Dorcas.*

HERMANN, *anxiously.*

No, let me go instead!
I know the road they took. If they come back
By another route, you can receive them here.
It is best so, believe me. —

[*Aside.*

I will not
Bring her back here, but take her to the North
Until all this is settled. —

[*To Herbert.*

Give me power
To act for you. A most unpleasant journey
'T would be for you. You are far better here.
And the first meeting under circumstances ——

HERBERT, *hastily.*

It will be best. You 're right. Go, act for me.
How soon can you be ready?

HERMANN.

Now!

HERBERT.

Agreed!
I will prepare the necessary papers. —
Of these new matters not a word, you know,
Out of this room, till we have all in order.
I am convinced; but to convince the world
More is required.

HERMANN.

I 'll choose the horse myself
That is to carry me; I am no horseman,
And yours perhaps would scorn my awkward hand.

HERBERT.

Choose while I write. —
[*Hermann goes out.*
Am I, then, glad or sorry?

My wife is still my wife; that radiant creature
Will light my life once more.
Her birth is stained, —
Not with that deep, abominable taint, —
But stained. How shall I hide it from myself?
How from the world? We must invent some story,
And it must be accepted. We 'll suppress
One part of Hecate's history; we 'll bring forward ——
Well, something will occur. — Meanwhile, we 'll travel
During a certain time. We 'll go abroad.
And then —— Oh, everything wears out in time! —
What will my father say?
Oh, bitter fate!
Oh, were I what I was two weeks ago!
Have I done right in yielding to this German?
Yes, it was well. He will conduct her hither.
Here is her place, — in any case, her place.

Poor homeless dove, thy resting-place is here!
What is the world to me? My angel wife!
We will defy it, will forget it! come! —
The Doctor will return. This must be ready.

[*He draws the writing-materials towards him and writes.*

PURSUIT.

SCENE II.

In front of the house. HERMANN *walks up and down, making gestures of impatience.*

HERMANN.

Not ready yet! Well, I must wait their pleasure.
They 'll take their time. No use in fretting at them.
Patience, then! patience! — Now I think of it,
Who 's to go with me? Ah, well thought of! who?
Boaz? No, no! Melas? Yes. Milo? Yes.
Philip? No. Pyrrhus? Yes. No. — Two will do
Better than more. The tender-hearted Melas,
The sturdy Milo. —

[*To a servant who passes.*

Boy, go call me Melas
And Milo quickly. Bid them dress themselves
To attend me on a journey for the master.
Tell them they go on horseback, — that the horses
Are almost ready, — they must make despatch. —

[*Servant goes.*

Patience, now! patience! If I took a book? —

[*Takes out a book and begins to read.*

I cannot. —

[*Looks at his watch.*

After all, not twenty minutes.
It must have stopped. —

[*Puts his watch to his ear.*

No. Sit down quietly. —

[*He seats himself on a rustic bench, takes off his hat and places it beside him, leans back, and falls into a fit of musing.*

This Dorcas is for me a curious study.
Her mother was a native African,
A princess, — so she says, and I believe it.
Her father was a Spanish nobleman.
She tells no lie in that. The most worn-out
Of worn-out castes is this noblesse of Spain.
She is the product of an undeveloped
And of an effete race. Yes, that is it.
The moral faculties, the last to reach
Their full perfection in the rising race,
Are also first to show deterioration
In a declining one. The intellect
Seems for a season to rest unimpaired,
Or is but rendered more acute and prompt
By the enfeebling of the hold of conscience.
Dorcas unites the fixedness of purpose
And the strong passions of a rising race
With the keen intellectual subtilty
Of a degenerate one.
From both her parents,
The savage princess and the Spanish noble,
She has her blind, unreasoning arrogance,
And that intolerance of subjection found
In families in which the use of power
Has been hereditary, — that impatience
Of all restraint that sends the unlawful scions

Of noble or royal houses on adventure
Glorious or criminal, and which compels,
When other outlet from compulsion fails,
To deep dissimulation, or the refuge
Of death self-given.
Well, what more ingredients
Go to make up this strange, fantastic whole?
Or with her African or Spanish blood —
For either lineage might promise it —
She has received the ecstatic temperament
Which lets her claim, perhaps endows her with
A subtile sense, a preternatural insight,
Through which she reads and rules the minds of others:
Power, to its owners even, obscure and awful,
Working unbid, absent when most entreated.

This Woodford says that in her youth she was
A buoyant creature, made for dance and song, —
Fitful and wayward, but yet full of charm.
I can conceive it, startling as it seems.
Yes, just these light, capricious, graceful natures,
In their youth so enchanting, and that guard —
When all most happy circumstances meet —
Even to old age sometimes their fascination,
Are those that, the required conditions given,
Develop the most dark depravity.
I saw a picture once in Italy
Of a fair girl whose fresh, arch, dimpled face
Was turned towards a mirror that gave back,
Not the young loveliness which sought its image,

But that same countenance when years had written
The history of a lifetime in its lines:
A care-ploughed forehead mocked that smooth young
brow;
A gleam of guile replaced the coquetry
That flickered from those gay, defiant eyes;
Malevolent scorn replied to innocent archness;
Effrontery answered sweet audacity.
Oh, what a tragedy was written there!
Even such a tragedy that creature's life!
And such surround us, if we could but see them!

Hecate — a ruin of another sort!
What elements are met in her? Her mother,
By her account, which Woodford has confirmed,
A sweet and gentle lady. The affection
Her feeble younger sister felt for her
Would seem to show her strong as well as tender;
For the weak love not weakness.
Hecate's father?
By all that we can learn of him from Woodford,
And from the facts that have transpired, it seems
He must have been a man of energy
And of refinement, but imperious,
Unscrupulous, and passionate. In Hecate
We see the father's ardent, resolute nature,
His love of power, his pride, his rashness, tempered
By the poor mother's truth and tenderness.
Here the barbarian element is absent.
Not here the absorption of all faculties

In one idea, that single-minded hate
That feasted slowly on its victim's ruin
With the long patience of a safe revenge.
Her act was prompted more by love than vengeance:
She sought to save her child. The hapless being
Who exchanged lots with it was sacrificed
Because no other means of rescue offered.
If she refused to the defrauded one
The name of child, withheld the tenderness
That might have softened her hard lot, 't was not
From cruelty: her loyal nature shrank
From winning love of one whom she had wronged.
Poor Hecate! in the abject Perdita
You saw your punishment, and not your triumph;
Hated in her the victim of your crime
More than your rival's daughter. Thou poor heart,
That shouldst have been the home of noble thoughts,
What hard decree of the unpitying Fates
Made thee the covert of remorse and shame?

Dorcas was silent; in her desert heart
She held her secret, and her hateful joys,
Content to live apart from sympathy.
But Hecate found, in that blank solitude
Her misery and her pride had spread about her,
A bitter penance. To the only being
She had a right to love she opened glimpses
Of her past life and inward world, thus risking
Discoveries that more than death she dreaded.
By every means she sought to find an outlet

For her full heart; in tale and song she poured it,
Winning compassion for imagined griefs
That she might feign it yielded to her own.
Oh, blest Oblivion, shroud her senses still!
To wake to feeling were to wake to pain.
Oh, shroud them still in thy compassionate darkness,
Until with thine the mortal veil is rent! —

A movement yonder, and the tramp of horses!
At last! at last! Now I rejoin you, Helen!
Now I escort you freely, openly,
To a safe home! But you are there already.
That wretched woman overrates her mischief:
She could not know our plans, has not betrayed them.
Ah, will the face of your old friend be pleasant?

[*Goes out.*

TRAGEDY OF SUCCESS.

RESCUE.

TRAGEDY OF SUCCESS.

RESCUE.

SCENE I.

A prison, partly underground, lighted by a small window near the ceiling. HELEN *is seated on the ground in a corner of the cell, her head supported against the wall. She looks faint and exhausted. Her child lies asleep on her lap. In another part of the cell lies* THERESA, *stretched on some straw.*

HELEN.

Theresa!

THERESA.

I am here. What wouldst thou, mistress?

HELEN.

Only to hear thy voice.

THERESA, *sitting up.*

Thou feel'st this silence?
These cruel walls! Only the ceaseless dropping
Of the foul water that but mocks our fever!
Could but a groan or sigh come through to us!

HELEN.

My poor Theresa! This is not thy place.
For thee the sunshine and the warm spring air.
Thy soul has need of healing, not of penance.
Why must thou share my lot?

THERESA, *rising.*

Oh, let me share it!
The elder griefs find soothing in the new.
These cooling tears, through which my frozen brain
Thawed into life, were given to thy sorrows.
Dear mistress, all there is of sense and will
In this awakening heart belongs to thee.
I have no soul but thine, no life but thine. —

[*Pause.*

Oh, were I but alone to share thy fate!
Hearts better worth than mine are breaking near. —

[*Leans her head against the wall, as if listening.*

This thirst that wastes us, oh, how doubly parching
It lies upon the hot lips of the wounded!
Oh, mistress dear, you that were once so high,
You have no power now greater than the humblest!
These walls, these bolts, stand firm before your word,
Feeble as my poor tears.

HELEN.

If God had willed,
My feeble word, thy helpless tears, had been
Stronger than walls and bars.

THERESA.

How calm thou art!
Is this peace real? Or does it storm within?

HELEN.

Peace is at hand, most real. Not human wrath,
But His calm will conducts me to my fate.
I feel His hand. I yield me to its guidance.
The path is short. For thee, my poor Theresa,
Whose earthly journey ends not here, for thee,
And for the faithful guide, the noble friend,
My heart is heavy. But the great Disposer,
Who has ordained my fate, has ordered theirs.
I will trust them to Him, as I have trusted
This life so twined with mine that its soft tendrils
Hold back the flitting soul whose ties to earth
Are severed all but these. Not long! not long!
The upward force prevails; the tender bonds
Slowly detach themselves.

THERESA.

How white! how still!
Oh, let me take the child!

HELEN, *faintly.*

No, let him rest
Upon this heart while life yet stirs in it.
When it is silent, warm him upon thine.

THERESA.

Thou wast so strong! The hardships of the road,

The fasts, the watchings had no power o'er thee,
While our road lay to freedom. With thy hope
Thy life sank, too. Oh, stay with me, my mistress!
Thou art my hope! What am I without thee? —
What region is it here? How far is it
To where our home was? Have they heard of us?
If they could know, oh, would they not have pity?

HELEN.

They know not yet. The road is long and rude.
Before they learn, between us and their anger
Will stand the reconciler. This cold form,
Impassive then to love and hate, will win
With mute entreaty pardon for the love
Thou gav'st the fugitive. — Oh, might it speak
To that poor heart the pardon of its harshness!
He will stand near me when these senseless ears
Are closed to his regrets, these frozen lips
Powerless to frame the accents of forgiveness!

[*Raising her head and her clasped hands.*

Then soften Thou the anguish of that hour,
O Thou All-Merciful! forgive! forgive!

[*Her head sinks forward.*

THERESA, *kneeling beside her.*

Oh, lean thy weary head on me! —

[*Theresa puts her arm round Helen to draw her towards herself, but suddenly utters a sharp cry. She remains in the same posture for a few moments, then gently withdraws the child from the lap of its mother. She folds it tenderly in her arms.*

Mine now!

RESCUE.

SCENE II.

Room in the house at Belrespiro. HERBERT, *to whom enters* BOAZ.

BOAZ.

News, master! news!

HERBERT.

How dare you bellow out
"*News*" in my face? What news can you have brought
That is not hateful as the mouth that tells it?

BOAZ.

But news! good news! The runaways are taken!
'Zekiel showed fight. Only the worse for him!

HERBERT, *with great irritation.*

Tell what you have to tell, and spare your comments!

BOAZ.

They 're taken! taken! all of them are taken!
Ezekiel, and that silly girl Theresa,
Who must be running her long goose-neck in
To other people's dangers.

HERBERT, *impatiently.*

Well, what else?

BOAZ.

Why, nothing else; only they 're all in jail.

HERBERT.

All? — who?

BOAZ.

Ezekiel and Theresa and ——

HERBERT, *impatiently.*

Her mistress ——

BOAZ.

Taken; and the little child.

HERBERT, *to himself.*

The child is my child. Helen is my wife
By divine law and human. — In a jail!
My wife and child lodged in a jail! What way
Is there now out of this? —

[*To Boaz.*

You grinning rascal,
Out of my sight! — Where are you going? Stop!

BOAZ.

Thank master, yes.

HERBERT.

Where did you get all this?

BOAZ.

Turpin brought word. — I was upon the watch

Out on the road. I saw him, got his news,
And, by a shorter path, ran here before him. —
That Northern man that could n't stay at home
Has got a taste of Southern lead.

HERBERT.

What man?

BOAZ.

That man that came to help them from the North,
Where all the mischief comes from.

HERBERT.

Silence! Go,
Order the carriage out, the travelling-carriage.

BOAZ.

Master!

HERBERT.

Off with you! Where 's this messenger?

BOAZ.

He must be just at hand.

HERBERT.

Go, send him here.
First order out the carriage.

BOAZ.

Master!

HERBERT.

Go!

BOAZ.

But master does n't know; perhaps they 'll be here
Before he gets well started.

HERBERT.

They will be here?

BOAZ.

They were to follow instantly, he said.

HERBERT.

The carriage, quick! —

[*Boaz goes.*

What if they should arrive
Like captured runaways! Impossible!
They could not dare! — Oh, what could they not dare,
Seeing her thus escaping and pursued? —
But she is mine again! Even if I would,
I could not break the ties that bind me to her.
Poor Helen! Oh, why could she not have waited
But a few days? Oh, fatal obstinacy!
And yet I bless it. Now she is my wife,
I love the pride that almost made me hate her. —
I cannot bear this waiting. I must go.
I will walk on, and let the carriage follow.

[*Goes out.*

RESCUE.

SCENE III.

The avenue at Belrespiro. HERBERT *alone. From the spot where he stands a more distant part of the winding avenue is visible through an opening between the trees. A number of persons are seen moving along. As Herbert watches them, they disappear behind the trees.*

HERBERT.

What means this moving mass? It comes demurely,
With measured tread. 'T is not a random throng,
And yet a motley. Men and women walk,
Holding the hands of little children. Sounds
Of voices raised in song are borne to me.
What can this mean, this strange audacity?
Can they be bringing back the lost in triumph?
This is the Doctor's work. He has exceeded
The powers I gave him. I enjoined on him
The strictest secrecy; and yet, if they
Have not learned Helen's story, could they dare
To make a demonstration such as this? —
It must be so. — Yet these approaching strains
Are mournful more than gay. — The train is lost
Behind the trees. I will await it here.
Or rather, shall I not return, receive her
Within the house? I dread this public meeting.
Yet our first interview, in any case,
Will be constrained. Perhaps the crowd about us,

Which justifies reserve, will rather aid
To make away with these first awkward moments.
In public she must be at least polite.
The ice once broken, I shall find the means
To justify myself. I will lay all
Upon my ardent love. She will relent.
How should she not? Her heart is placable.
He who is loved is readily forgiven.

The songs have ceased. Only the laggard trampling
Of dilatory feet. No joyful errand
Ever sent forth such tardy messengers.
What ominous dread comes over me? The air
Has a strange chill. This crowding of events
On one another has so shocked my nerves
That every breath has power to startle me.
I shall be seeing signs and wonders next,
Like this poor ignorant people.
Not a sound!
No shout, no cry, no song! A deathlike stillness,
As if the earth had opened and received them!
I will go on, that the reality
May clear my brain of these uneasy phantoms.
[*Goes.*

RESCUE.

SCENE IV.

Another part of the avenue. A bier supported by four men, of whom the two in front are MELAS *and* MILO. *They have stopped near the old tree mentioned in the First Part, round which the avenue widens.* HERMANN *stands near the bier, his head sunk on his breast.* FLORA *is taking Helen's child from the arms of* THERESA, *who looks pale and faint, but resigns it reluctantly. A throng of people, who have been following in procession, stand silent, their eyes strained towards the bier, or turned on each other with looks of mute inquiry and sympathy.*

MELAS.

Let us rest here.

[*They set down the bier.*

'T was underneath this tree
She stopped, the last time she came home. 'T was here
The master waited for her. Now he waits,
Not in the shadow of the dancing leaves,
But the chill shelter of the silent stone.
There will she join him next!

[*Melas sinks down on his knees and raises his hands silently, in the attitude of prayer. All follow his example, except Hermann, who places himself under the great tree, and stands, his arms folded and his head sunk.*

MILO, *rises suddenly from his knees.*

But see who comes!

[DORCAS *enters; all rise.*

THERESA.

Does she profane this moment and this presence?

DORCAS.

Where is she? Oh, Alondra! Oh, my child!

[*Theresa looks round wildly, then turns away.*

Oh, look at me! I am not wholly hateful.
These eyes thou shunn'st have beamed down love on thee.
The voice thou shrink'st from lulled thee softly once.
Thou dost not know me, dear?

THERESA.

Take hence this woman!
She is the cause of all.

DORCAS.

My grief, not I.
Look on me!

[*Sinking down, and clasping her hands in supplication.*

Little daughter dear, look on me!

[*Theresa covers her face with her hands.*

Am I so hideous? Oh, I was not once!
Look on me only, and I am Pamela!
Look on me only, and I have not sinned!
If I am lost, it is through loss of thee!
Be mine again, and give me to myself!

HERMANN.

Be merciful, Theresa!

THERESA.

Let *her* be so,
And cease to call me child. Tell her who lies
Extended there. I cannot speak to her.

DORCAS.

They have no need to tell me.

THERESA.

If her eyes
Meet mine but once, if my voice answer hers,
I am undone; her spell has fallen on me;
My life is given to crime, my soul to hell!

DORCAS, *in a tone of despair.*

Accursed! accursed!

[*She approaches the bier.*

O victim! thou hast triumphed!

[*She sinks down near the bier.*

[ALICE *enters by a side-path which opens into the avenue near the great tree. She goes to Hermann and takes his hand in silence. At this moment, a movement and murmur among the crowd.* HERBERT *is seen approaching. He advances with a slow and uncertain step, looking anxiously about him. Seeing Hermann, he hastens up to him.*

HERBERT.

You have come back!

HERMANN.

I have come back alone.

HERBERT, *hesitating and agitated.*

What is it you would tell me?

[*With vehemence, pointing to the bier.*

What is here?

HERMANN.

The empty casket that once held our jewel.

[*Herbert stands motionless for a few moments, then goes towards the bier. Alice intercepts him and draws him back gently.*

HERBERT.

Alice! Oh, sister, speak to me! You loved her!
Oh, tell me I am not her murderer!

ALICE.

Brother, dear brother, in her name I speak:
Forgive yourself!

HERBERT.

Oh, never, never, sister!

ALICE.

Forgive yourself! A Higher Will than yours
Ordained her fate. A Higher Will than yours
Composed the strife between your love and pride.
That sentence you could neither shun nor bear,
When human will or human law pronounced it,
Is now irrevocably passed. In vain
Your tenderness or your regrets assail it.

Bow to it, then. You have not strength to wrestle
With the fierce angel of remorse. Submit.
Receive into your heart, through Heaven's favor,
The peace you cannot win through victory.
God requires not where He has not bestowed.

HERBERT.

Alice, my sister, oh, what bitter soothing!

ALICE.

Not so, my brother. In this solemn presence
I cannot meet thee with consoling words
That truth disowns. I cannot speak thee guiltless.
Thy own heart would repel the false remission.
But I can bring to thee her gentle pardon,
Can tell thee there is care for thee in heaven,
Can pray thee to accept the love and pity
Her pleading spirit bends to earth to offer.
Forgive thyself, for thou hast been forgiven!
Was my word harsh? I did not mean it so.
Not mine her unexhausted tenderness.
And, brother, oh, this grief is heavy on me
As on thyself. Nor bear I this alone.
He whom I loved, not with an earthly love,
But with the silent reverential worship
That mortals offer to translated saints,
He, through thy weakness, through thy fault, has met
The outlaw's death, — he fills the felon's grave.
My brother, — yet I cannot see thee suffer.
Thou wast not made for it. Lay down thy pride.

Tempt not a struggle, where thy soul must sink.
For thee is but submission or despair!

HERBERT, *in a voiceless whisper.*

Despair!

HERMANN, *to himself, looking at Herbert.*

Despair! Weakness and passion meeting, —
Unuse in suffering, unconceding pride!
Soon the rash hand will end the abortive strife!

[*Herbert goes out with a slow, uncertain step.*

ALICE.

For me there yet remains a part on earth.

[*Approaches the bier.*

Sister and friend! what not thy generous life
Could gift me with, thy timeless death bequeaths me!
I stand by thee to claim my heritage!
That purpose which thy noble soul conceived,
And would have shared with me, — unworthy then
To be the partner of thy noble hope, —
I now embrace! With all I have and am
I do endow it! Thou wouldst work with love, —
But I with love and hate! I bring both forces!
Thou couldst forgive, thou consecrated martyr!
For thou didst walk unharmed amid the fires,
Protected by thy pure, celestial raiment!
But I, whose lower nature bore no charm
Against their scorching, I, within whose heart,
From its first beats, the tyrant's passions nestled,
Leaving their deadly trail, how can I pardon?

Tremble, thou coward Wrong that cradledst me!
Tremble! thy rearling knows thy hidden crimes!
Not thy crushed victim lifts his trembling hand
To aim the knife that seeks thy guilty heart:
Thy pampered minion deals the avenging stroke!
For thy false smiles I give thee stern defiance!
Pay thee with scorn thy treacherous caresses!
By all these scars I wear upon my soul
I vow to thee uncompromising war!
Put from thee now thy robes of gold and crimson,
Ungem thy hands, undiadem thy brow!
Thy hour of mourning comes, thy hour of shame!
I bear the spear of truth! Before its touch
Thy roses wither, thy false graces fall,
Leaving thee in thy lonely loathliness!
For even thy sycophants shall shrink from thee,
When the world knows thee as thy victims know!
Slavery, thy day is past! Nor think to fall
Crowned by thy doom, as fall more happy martyrs!
Thou shalt lie down to thy eternal sleep
In ignominy! Gentle hand of pity
Shall never strew thy bier, nor song and legend
Twine their bright wreaths round thy unseemly grave!
Turning away from thy reproach, thy nearest
Shall ask for thee the mercy of oblivion!

The curtain falls.

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